

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1899.

THE TOWER GARDENS.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

LET us return to Arnold Birkett.

We left him at the corner of Barking Alley, Tower Hill, within a good stone's throw of John Harbuckle's house in the north-west angle of Trinity Square. He stood for a moment on or very near the spot where in the middle of last century they cut off old Lord Lovat's grey, but not particularly honourable, head ; on which occasion the scaffold fell in, killing a good many of the people who were tipping at the bar that was doing a roaring trade underneath it.

Arnold Birkett's mind was, however, far too deeply engrossed in his own affairs for any historical association to have the slightest interest for him ; besides which he could not well recall this edifying circumstance, because he did not know it had ever occurred.

He looked as he felt, ill and grievously shaken ; but he made a great effort to rouse himself.

"I must remember," he told himself, "I must remember she was always delicate. Under the most favourable circumstances she could never have been a strong woman ; and who shall say whether an early death is not better than a long weak life ? Not that hers, poor darling, could never have been a long one ; I'm more and more convinced it ever could have been ! But how could I help it ?"

Was he conscious that he was trying to shelter himself under some subterfuge ? Was he making the best of a bad case, before a conscience that refused to be deluded ? He seemed, if it were so, to get but poor consolation from the attempt. Perhaps the stern judge within would have none of his specious pleading, or scorned to accept as an axiom, that necessity knows no law.

In spite of all excuses, he felt conscience-stricken and heart-sick, as he walked a short distance westward through the busy streets.

Presently, feeling very cold and wretched, he turned into one of the many city dining-rooms.

He found a warm corner, where he took a basin of soup and some brandy, with great deliberation, while the other men who crowded the place were despatching more substantial refreshments, at a rate perfectly unattainable to those who have not for years accustomed themselves to getting their mid-day meal in from five to ten minutes.

"A herd of many swine feeding," said Birkett to himself grimly, as he began his own slight refection. "'Tisn't a lovely sight, but what would I give to be able to follow their example as once I could! Phaugh! How sick I am of everything! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable it is to me! All this eager hurry and bustle, what's the use of it?"

Two men behind him, having snatched a hasty meal, rushed off together in a great state of excitement.

"Happy beings, they've still something left to fight for! Happy any man who finds an object engrossing enough to take him out of himself, even if it's only shellac! I suppose I shall have to go into business again. One must keep on living."

Slightly warmed and refreshed, he went out again and wandered about the business lanes that lead out of Tower Street, and mingled with the crowd of merchants and brokers, hovering about the Commercial Sale Rooms, and found his way among the mysterious passages between the streets, where men were rushing to and fro with samples of drugs, or bundles of catalogues of forthcoming sales.

No one spoke to him, no one recognised him.

But after a while, among these busy throngs, his own footsteps quickened in sympathy. A kind of magnetic attraction held him to the place; a sense of being at home once more made him linger; a longing to throw himself again into the battle of life came upon him as he saw others fighting.

"It's no use," he said, "I must get into business again. I *will* get into business again. Who can tell? I might even yet be able to set myself right with the world, which is possible, if not with myself, which is impossible. Ah, if once I had had but half the money I have now, how different it might all have been! It seems all but useless now. Is anything worth striving for? Yet a man must strive; how can one be idle among all these busy men, and how can a man who has so long been in business keep away from it? There's an old name—and there—and there. Those people have built new premises, I see. So-and-so seems to have taken a fresh partner," he went on, gradually becoming more and more interested with what he saw.

"Shall I go boldly to John Harbuckle, and tell him everything?" he asked himself presently. "He knows where my Jessie is. I suppose it will come to that some time or another. Why not at

once? No, I can't; I cannot. Am I radically a coward? There are men I can't face. He's one of them."

The dining-room of the Tavistock is not very unlike the coffee-room. It is the fashion in that old-established house to have the joints on wheeled tables for the better pleasing of those who are fastidious as to their cut of beef or mutton.

The waiter found Mr. Birkett difficult to please on the evening of this particular day; and no sooner had that most obliging functionary left him to attend to someone else, than Mr. Birkett called him back.

"Here, take that away," he said, shivering. "Let me have a large pot of strong tea and some toast, at once."

"You appear to feel this weather keenly," remarked the man who occupied the seat facing Arnold Birkett. It was the first sentence that had been spoken to him since he had landed, except by the hotel people.

"Why, yes," he returned. "It's the very opposite to the climate I've been accustomed to for many years past. Sho-o-o!" with another shiver. "These east winds are dreadful, they go right through and through me."

"Through anyone who hasn't the hide of a rhinoceros or some other pachy-what-do-you-call-it creature! And you, I presume, have just come from the tropics. Pardon me, but as I see you are wearing a Zodiac ring, I'll venture to guess you've been recently on the West Coast of Africa."

"Your guess is correct. Yes, I've managed to put in eight years in that delightful place, with only two breaks of four months each at Madeira. You've seen these rings before?" asked Birkett, twisting a golden circlet, from which the signs of the Zodiac stood out in high relief, round and round as he spoke.

"I made a trip to the Cape many years since," returned the other, whose name, I may as well say here, was Tildesley, "and staying a few days at Madeira on my way home I noticed that all the men from the West Coast (and I met a good many there) wore those rings. I don't think I've seen them anywhere else."

"They are a speciality of our part of the world," said Birkett. "I suppose the Mohammedans introduced them."

"You don't mean to say you have Mohammedans out there?" exclaimed Tildesley, who had been steadily working through an excellent dinner, from oysters to gorgonzola, the last morsel of which he took as soon as he had asked the question.

"Thousands, I should say," returned Birkett. "Very superior people too, quite the best of the native tribes; clothes wearers, and clean as well as picturesque."

"Two good qualities not often found together," interpolated Tildesley.

"As I have found to my cost only too often," said Birkett, really

quite delighted to have anyone to talk to; for, in spite of his melancholy, he was an essentially social being, with a great natural liking for society. "These Mandingo fellows, for the Mohammedans belong nearly all of them to the Mandingo tribe, are really fine men. They wear cloaks something like a priest's robe, with wide sleeves, and as white as snow. The innocent whiteness of those robes does not, however, prevent their being excellent receptacles for stolen goods."

"Then they've always a cloak for their sins. Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Tildesley.

Mr. Birkett laughed also, a good-natured laugh, and he looked straight across the table into Tildesley's face, with eyes brightened for an instant with a pleasant light evidently peculiar to them. It was a something quite individual by which, if once noticed, you might easily have recognised Birkett again. It lasted only for an instant, yet it made Tildesley interested in him. It was one of Mr. Birkett's peculiarities that people always were interested in him, and always wanted to know more about him.

"The African climate doesn't seem to have injured you much," Tildesley went on, after a short chuckle over his wretched pun. "Waiter, you can bring me some coffee. I thought the Coast was the white man's grave?"

"You wouldn't think it but know it, if you'd lived there," said Birkett. "You dine with a man on Sunday and go to his funeral on Monday."

"Sharp work!" ejaculated Tildesley.

"Sharp indeed! I've had considerably over a hundred doses of fever myself, and during the last attack I heard them order my coffin, and remark that I should make a good corpse; so I determined not to risk another, although, climate apart, the Coast life suits me; it's so pleasant to feel you're making money quickly."

"Ah, it must be! It must be! That, unfortunately, is a feeling one seldom knows in London, very seldom indeed. Ah!"

And Mr. Tildesley sighed a long-drawn sigh, and shook his head with a dolefulness that contrasted rather oddly with his eminently prosperous appearance. He was short, stout, with a shining bald head, a spotless white cravat, an expanse of magnificent shirt-front, and other indications of a dress suit under the grey overcoat.

"Ah!" he continued with another sigh. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me how money is quickly made in any part of the world just now? Not, of course, if it's a trade secret."

"No secret," said Birkett easily; "although times aren't even with us what they were a few years ago. Competition has reached even us; but then you see fever kills off so many of our competitors that the staying horse is bound to win."

"Ha! and you've been a staying horse, I suppose?" asked Mr. Tildesley, stroking his carefully-shaven chin as he looked up at Birkett rather keenly.

"To a certain extent, yes; I've seen the last of a good many," replied Birkett, in a tone that invited further questioning.

"Know London?"

"My knowledge of London is like our Coast fever, intermittent. I have vague childish memories of it. When I was a young man I was again in London for a few months, but that, as I need not tell you, is now many years ago, and I returned from Africa only yesterday."

"I'm happy to have met with you. It's something to have sat by a man who's had a hundred odd fevers and got over them. Are you making a long stay at this house?—if so I'll call. My name's Tildesley, Dunster Court, Mincing Lane, and 'Crow's Nest,' Lambrooke."

The two men exchanged cards.

"Thanks," said Birkett, as he put Tildesley's card into his case. "I shall be here, at any rate, for a fortnight, and I shall be very pleased to see you. May I call upon you in the city?"

"Do," said Tildesley; "I shall be delighted to see you. I'm seldom out long together; choose your own time. I expect Mrs. Tildesley and my son and his wife directly; we're going to hear 'Madame Angot' with some friends from Liverpool. What will you do with yourself?"

"Oh, I sha'n't venture out again! I'll get up a roaring fire in my room and turn in early. Perhaps I may stave off the attack I feel is hovering about me."

Here Mr. Tildesley's son came in and announced that "the others" were waiting in the brougham.

"Well, good night to you," said the elder Tildesley, rising and buttoning up his overcoat. "I hope you'll be better to-morrow. Look me up in the city to-morrow if you can!"

"I will," said Birkett, with another of those gleams of light in his eyes. "May you all have a pleasant evening!"

So they parted.

"Is that man to be trusted?" was the first question each one asked himself a moment afterwards.

"Liverpool people, eh?" said Birkett to himself, as he went upstairs to his own room. "I think I'd rather not see any Liverpool people just yet. What's the good?"

Again, as on the evening before, his meditations by the roaring fire, as he sat in the great chintz-covered chair, all bright with poppies and cornflowers, seemed, to judge by his expression, far from consolatory.

Again he took out the portraits, again he kissed them. Was it a form, a habit, a long-established custom, begun when they were fresh, but fading with them?

This evening he lingered over all that was left of the portrait of the little girl.

"Shall I look for her?" he asked.

After a long pause, he answered:

"Not yet! Not yet! It won't do yet! Let me see what turns up here first. Having waited so long, let me wait until——"

And he went off into a region of thought, where we cannot follow him.

"Am I an arrant coward? Ah, there are things that the boldest man couldn't face if he had a vestige of conscience left."

"I must know what has become of her!" he said at last. "She is all I have left to me in this world. In this world! How do I know? Perhaps she, too, is gone. John Harbuckle could tell me. He knows. Come what may, I'll call on him to-morrow! He has no reason to love me, I admit; and yet, it's strange, but so it is, he's the only man I feel I can trust. I'll call on John Harbuckle to-morrow."

Not without much inward strife did Arnold Birkett come to this determination. The agitation of the whole day and the keen east wind now began to tell alarmingly upon him. A few minutes later he was shuddering over the fire with African ague.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

JOHN HARBUCKLE could not settle down after that upheaval of his deepest affections.

By force of habit he managed to attend to his business much as usual, but no sooner had he left his office than a restless spirit took possession of him.

No longer could he sit by the hour writing antiquarian letters; no longer could he take pleasure in the discussions of the "Earth-Worms," that celebrated club in Great Turner Street, with whose members he had spent so many a happy evening; no longer was the chair of the local "Young Men's Christian Association" sufficient to fill the place in his heart which he now felt, more acutely than ever, was empty.

The Birrendale people kept him waiting for a day longer than was necessary. He could not settle down to anything; he spent two evenings in wandering about the London streets. At other times he rarely went ten yards without finding some fresh object of interest, now he walked along scarcely seeing anything except that circumstance of four-and-twenty years ago, and what had come of it; the circumstance that to his mind was expressed by the one word "Jessie."

The Jessie he remembered was the mother of that very pretty girl in Birrendale. She had been pretty too, but her beauty had been of a gentler, less vigorous type than her daughter's.

It was she who had lived in Catherine Court. Perhaps the City air did not suit her; she was always fragile and delicate there. To John Harbuckle that had been one of her charms. She was younger than he. As a child, she used to play with his sister Mary, who was the youngest of the family. John Harbuckle had always been very fond of Jessie of Catherine Court. As she grew up his love for her increased. She was accustomed to seeing him; she thought she loved him. They used to stroll about the Tower Gardens together of an evening. They were at last to have been married in a few weeks; he had taken a house out of town, thinking she might grow stronger in the country air.

But they never went into that house.

Mary Harbuckle was then engaged to James Bayliss, whom she had met when staying with some friends near Woolwich.

Mary was a rather pretty blonde in those days.

One evening John Harbuckle and his Jessie were sitting on the bench under the acacias that face the Beauchamp Tower, talking of their new home with quiet happy contentment, when they saw Mary and James and, for the first time, Arthur Bayliss, the brother of James. Arthur Bayliss was a tall handsome man, very much his brother's superior, and with singularly attractive ways.

Poor Jessie soon found out that her liking for John Harbuckle was only a calm affectionate regard. She wrote him an honest letter. She told him all, offered still to marry him if he would not release her. He could not marry her without her love; so she became the wife of Arthur Bayliss, who was then the head of the prosperous Liverpool firm his father had created.

John Harbuckle heard little of them for some years. Then came rumours of trouble and disaster. At last, opening the *Times* one morning, he saw the announcement of the death of an Arthur Bayliss of Liverpool, and a day or two later the same announcement with the addition of the full address and this important item:

"Drowned in the foundering of the African mail steamer *Mellicoorie*."

There were in the paper of that and the preceding two or three days the announcements of several other deaths by the same casualty, together with the details of the wreck as given by the only survivor—the mate.

John Harbuckle, who had a book of carefully-arranged newspaper cuttings, kept that announcement.

From Captain Bayliss, who had just returned from India with little more than his pay, John Harbuckle heard soon afterwards that Jessie and her one little girl were entirely dependent upon her brother-in-law.

As soon as he well could he called on Jessie. He found her ill in mind and body, and in widow's weeds. With infinite gentleness he asked her again to be his wife, offering to wait her time however long it might be. She turned upon him with such shrinking horror in her

face as he had never dreamed of before; he could but think that grief had turned her brain. She died a few months later, and Captain and Mrs. Bayliss took her little girl to live with them.

Then a legacy was left to Arthur Bayliss. Captain James was the next-of-kin. He took that as well as the little girl, throwing it away upon Cauldknowe, and was now himself dead.

Such is a brief outline of the history on which John Harbuckle meditated as he wandered up and down the London streets.

Is it to be wondered that he thought more of Jessie Bayliss than of any of the others in Birrendale? There was to him something very sacred, and solemn, and yet romantic in the thought that he should have to shelter that girl, that daughter of his lost Jessie, from the hardships that without his protection she would have to endure.

"A very dear girl! A very dear girl! And her daughter! They ought not to have lost a post. I hope I sha'n't have trouble with them! But Mary's difficult to deal with; she always was, poor thing; even James felt so at times. If there isn't a letter this morning, I shall go at once; I cannot bear this suspense," he said to himself, as he went down to breakfast the third morning after his letter had been posted.

John Harbuckle's dining-table proper being now entirely covered with books and papers which none dared to touch, breakfast had been laid for him on a small, straight-legged Chippendale affair, that had been drawn up near the fire, as the morning, though bright, was chilly.

The arrangements of the meal were to the thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Robbins and of John Harbuckle himself admirable.

The damask cloth was shining and spotless; the old silver tea-pot warmly muffled in a thick cosy; the great blue china cup still unchipped; the *Times* and letters waiting to be read beside it; the fish, eggs and toast done to a turn, the only chair that was not laden with books drawn up to the fire; and a pot of choice red tulips flaming in the centre of the table amidst a morning sunbeam that entered the room through a south-east window.

This was a little picture John Harbuckle's eyes had often rested upon with pleasure. To-day it struck him that that picture was after all but still life, mere *genre*. It lacked something—no, somebody.

He took up the letters with nervous eagerness. At last there was one with the Kirkhope postmark.

"But not in Mary's hand," he said. "I'm afraid I shall have trouble with Mary!"

He opened the note; it was only a very brief one from Alison:

"Cauldknowe, by Kirkhope,
"Birrendale,
"April 12th, 187—

"DEAR UNCLE JOHN,—My mother requests me to thank you for your kind letter. We shall be happy to see you here as soon as you can make it convenient to come.

"The weather is extremely cold, so be sure you wear your warmest clothes.

"Hoping to see you soon, and with best love from all of us,

"I am, dear Uncle John,

"Your affectionate niece,

"ALISON BAYLISS."

Not much of a letter, truly, but what a work it had been to get it off! What a quantity of Alison's scribbling paper had gone behind the fire, covered with Mrs. Bayliss's writing, before she had consented to her daughter's doing the business for her!

Uncle John read a great deal more between the lines than in them; but even he little knew what battles had been fought over nearly every important word.

"Now, I shall have to be firm with Mary," he said, "the thing of all others I detest being, when dealing with a woman. She'll never forgive me; but duty is duty. I see mine clearly in this case, and I am not going to be thwarted. Mary and the girls must come here, at least until we can see what next is to be done. But I foresee trouble! I never yet have been able to fight a woman. How complicated life grows as soon as you introduce the domestic element! Dear, dear, dear me!"

That note spoiled his breakfast. He read the few lines many times. He could not like them; they certainly were not Alison's.

"I'll go North by the night mail," he said.

"I'd go this morning only I can't put off Hartington's affair. Let me think: to-day's Friday, I must be here on Wednesday to meet Rogers and South. I can just manage it. I must go to Glasgow on Monday and settle up that wretched business with the money-lender. I don't like it. It's a dead loss; however, the quicker it's done the better. No, I'm not going to let Mary ruin me; although I've no doubt that is what Mary would call doing my duty. I'll send Mary a telegram. I'll tell her to expect me to breakfast to-morrow. I'll send it off at once."

After a short search he found a form, and sent the message to the post office by the hand of the trusty Robbins, who lost no time in conveying its wording to his wife, as soon as he returned.

The suspicions of the worthy couple had already been aroused by John Harbuckle's abnormal behaviour. Mr. and Mrs. Robbins were now convinced that, to use their own expression, "something was hup."

As the old bachelor saw the door close upon Mr. Robbins, he became exceedingly conscious that he had indeed crossed the Rubicon. He stood on his hearth-rug with his back to the fire, and surveyed the room, where for so many years he had reigned supreme, with a fond regret. He felt his mastership was fast coming to a close.

"It's all over!" he said, shaking his grey head. "It's all come to an end! What would Mary say to that table full of books? They shall all go upstairs. I'll have a den there—but it will never be this one! Never!"

His glance fell on some old Wedgwood plaques he had bought a day or two before the upheaval. They were lying among a number of catalogues and papers on the top of a bureau. He went to them.

"Soft as velvet," he said, passing his fingers over the surface of one of them, with almost a caressing tenderness. "Better than I thought they were. Those figures are Flaxman's! Ah! All that little game's nearly over! Woolcomb may have these for what I gave for them. I know he wants them."

Then he took up a small jar of the same material, the surface of which was gently rippled. With even greater tenderness he passed his finger up and down over the little undulations.

"How soft! How exquisitely soft!" he said; the sense of touch awakening long passed associations. "How like her hand!"

Robert Browning tells us of:

"Etrurian circlets found, some happy morn,
After a dropping April; found alive,
Spark-like 'mid unearthed slope-side fig-tree roots,
That roof old tombs at Chuisi."

"*Found alive, spark-like,*" after ages of burial! so alive and so spark-like was John Harbuckle's unearthed love for the girl that once had lived in Catherine Court, the Jessie he had wooed and lost in the Tower Gardens.

He put the jar down with a sigh, crossed the passage and went into the drawing-room. It had hardly been used since his mother's death, nor indeed in any conventional sense for some years before that lamented event.

John Harbuckle had found it a handy place for putting away such old furniture and curious books and rare china as he could not cram into his dining-room. On rainy evenings, when he did not care either to go out or to write antiquarian letters, he had been very fond of prowling about that room; he had a great affection for his things, and as he generally kept Mr. Robbins at work on them, he had always found enough to do in arranging what was to be done. Nor had it been merely selfish pleasure. He and his man not unfrequently, by dint of mending and polishing, often rendered tables, chairs and cabinets very acceptable presents for newly-married people of good taste; and he generally had on hand an old carved oak chest or two, new centuries since: "When ancient dames chose forth brocade—when reds and blues were indeed red and blue," but still very useful for holding a more perishable modern trousseau; such chests he had found very generally appreciated by the daughters

of several of his friends; they made an agreeable variety to card baskets and dressing bags, as wedding presents. He took a deep and genuine interest in young married—or about to be married—people.

"I'll have those two done up for the girls," he said; "the other things—ah! Mary will say I've turned the place into a broker's shop—I shall have to make some sort of a clearance, and I hate clearing up! I suppose I must sell these things and buy a new piano, and fashionable jim-cracks."

Poor John Harbuckle! I am afraid that his sister Mary cast a very cold shadow before her, a shadow that fell on him and chilled him.

Perhaps it was because he had been looking at those old chests, and thinking they would suit the girls; perhaps it was that ever since he had heard that voice from the cab his mind had been so full of one subject; perhaps because the soft ripples of the Wedgwood jar had felt to his touch so like a long vanished hand; but just as he re-entered his dining-room, for one fraction of a second, he saw a shadowy form of a girl sitting on the window settle half hidden by the faded crimson curtains.

He was not at all surprised. Jessie of Catherine Court had been there times without number. He only thought it would be very sweet to come up from the office now and then and find her daughter, real and living, sitting on that settle.

It was astonishing, even to himself, how the image of Jessie Bayliss had grown in his mind these last few days.

He again took up his place on the rug. He had not yet, so pre-occupied had he been, looked over the *Times*. There it lay, still folded, on the table, part of the first column and the date, April 11th, exposed to view.

John Harbuckle's thoughts presently reached a point at which to look at that paper, with its first column and its date, seemed by natural and unforced sequence the next step.

"April 11th! Then Monday was the 7th! I remember that was the date I wrote on my letter to Mary. The 7th! That's curious!"

He crossed over to the Wedgwood plaques, and having moved them, unearthed the book containing his newspaper cuttings, on which they had been lying.

He carefully turned over the pages until he came upon this:

"On the 7th of April, drowned in the foundering of the African mail steamer 'Mellicoorie,' Arthur Bayliss, of ——— Street, Liverpool."

"That's curious, very curious," said John Harbuckle. "The 7th of April, eight years ago! Well, well; a coincidence, a mere coincidence! Eight years ago! Exactly eight years! Curious, very curious! It's time I was in the office. I shall have several things

to arrange to-day. But that date and that voice is certainly a strange coincidence! I sha'n't mention it to Mary. She'll have a theory to account for it at once."

On the stairs John Harbuckle met Mr. Robbins, who asked him what bag or portmanteau he would like for the journey.

He told him briefly and went on, feeling suddenly half ashamed of himself and uncertain whether he were not going to treat Mr. and Mrs. Robbins rather shabbily.

He arranged for his few days' absence, and returned in the evening to his nest, feeling that he must give Robbins a preparatory hint before starting for Scotland. This weighed heavily upon him; his well-served dinner affected him as a silent reproach from Mrs. Robbins; his carefully-packed travelling-bag was, as it were, coals of fire heaped by Robbins himself upon his master's guilty head.

"Back on Wednesday to breakfast, did you say, sir?" asked Robbins, as he pulled the collar of John Harbuckle's overcoat straight.

"On Wednesday to breakfast," returned the perfidious old bachelor, as if oppressed with a grievous burden. "To breakfast," he repeated. "And, perhaps—oh, hem! I had better tell you that my widowed sister and her—and my nieces are thinking of coming to stay here shortly."

"Oh, indeed, sir!" was Mr. Robbins's audible remark.

"The house is rather crowded with things; I'm afraid—I'm afraid we shall have to make a new arrangement," said John Harbuckle, unpleasantly conscious that to his own mind at least the last sentence could be taken in two ways.

"The ladies will make things a bit pleasant for you, sir," remarked Robbins blandly. "Will they be staying long?"

"I can't tell; I can't tell at all. I hope so."

"Cab, sir? It's a nasty night; better have one."

"Very well," assented Mr. Harbuckle, thankful to be rid of the man's presence; so a few minutes later he was duly packed off to catch his train for the North.

"Pore old chap," observed Mr. Robbins, when he had related the news to his wife; "pore old chap! Don't he look as if he was going to be 'anged, that's all."

"Serve him right, the mean scoundrel!" exclaimed Mrs. Robbins. "Ladies, indeed! Not if I know it! Ladies, indeed—the mean creatures! Don't talk to me! I'm up to their tricks, and I can't abide 'em, and, what's more, I won't! Me stay in the house with Mrs. B. for my missis! No, thank you—no missis for me! And the way we've slaved after him, too! Well, I did think better of him, that I did! Talk of gratitood! Poof!"

John Harbuckle, as he was whirled through the Midlands, had an uncomfortable feeling that some such remark had been made about him, and he could not rise to a cheerful view of the situation.

The long night journey made him still more depressed. Daybreak among the Westmoreland hills soothed him a little; his spirits sank again as he crossed the dead levels by the side of the cold grey Solway; they were at zero when he alighted at the shabby little station of Kirkhope.

There he found a walk of a couple of miles before him, for the much-besplashed little omnibus, that later in the day awaited the trains, had not yet made its appearance.

The aspect of everything was dreary and unlovely in the extreme. The sky was leaden grey; there was a biting wind.

John Harbuckle crossed the cobble stones of the wide High Street of Kirkhope, and struck into a fine, hard turnpike road, running between beech-hedges, with here and there plantations of spruce, fir, and larch.

After he had walked about two miles with the wind in his face, he came to the avenue of rhododendrons that led to Mrs. Bayliss's house, and soon afterwards found himself on the red doorstep, with the white lines and dots, and, a minute later, before the blazing fire in the dining-room of Cauldknowe, where the cloth was already laid for breakfast.

Early as it was, Mrs. Bayliss had gone round to the farm. The two girls were in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Happily the scones had the moment before been transferred to their dish, and carefully wrapped up in shining white damask, so that without delay Alison and Jessie were able to run off to welcome Uncle John, whom they found trying to warm his hands by a fire which had hardly been lighted long enough to have much heat in it.

Alison, who held in affectionate memory his few words anent her "Border Towers," ran in looking very much delighted.

"Well, my dear child!" said John Harbuckle, in hardly so slow a tone as was usual with him.

"Dear Uncle John, I'm so very, very glad to see you again!" exclaimed Alison, who was an extremely warm-hearted girl, kissing him with a genuine welcome. "How cold and hungry you must be!"

"It looks very wintery here still, my dear. Ah, Jessie!" And he put out his hand to her, but without taking it she kissed him, just as Alison had done, and called him "Dear Uncle John."

"That voice! I hear it again in hers!" passed through John Harbuckle's brain, as Jessie's "Dear Uncle John" reached his ear.

CHAPTER XI.

JESSIE WILL PLAY.

"Your mother, Alison?" John Harbuckle asked, when their greeting was over.

"She's gone across to the farm," said Alison. "She always goes first thing in the morning, but we are rather earlier than usual, because we were expecting you. There now, let me draw this arm-chair to the fire, and do try if you cannot get warm." Alison pushed a great chair up to the fire as she spoke.

But John Harbuckle had gone to the window, and was looking out on the knotty lawn and at the opening in the woods, no longer clear-cut but overhung with unlopped branches, through which the Birren was to be seen, still rushing down to meet the Solway.

"Very wintery!" he said aloud.

"A dear girl! A very dear girl! How like her poor mother she's grown. But it's his voice and his eyes," was the thought that had driven him to the window.

"I wish it only *would* look wintery," exclaimed Alison. "It was lovely in the winter time; while you were having those dreadful fogs in London, the sun was bright and clear as if it were summer. Why, one day in Christmas week, when we were having lunch at the Johnstones', and someone was telling us that in London they were burning gas all day, I could see, as I sat at table, the Solway shining like silver in the distance; and the sun was so bright they had to let down the dining-room blind half-way."

"Then you wouldn't like to go to foggy London?" asked Mr. Harbuckle, turning round.

"Oh, Uncle John, it's the dream of our lives!" said Alison.

"And Alison's going to write all the London novels that Sir Walter hadn't time to get done!" cried Jessie.

John Harbuckle opened his eyes, which were of a good clear blue, and remarked:

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, indeed, and I am to be the heroine!" Jessie went on.

"And a very nice heroine too—a very nice heroine too!" And John Harbuckle's straight, shrewd lips parted with a kindly smile as he retreated to the fire and the arm-chair, and surveyed both the girls with evident interest and approval.

"Very nice! So you'll think when you've tasted my scones!" laughed Jessie. "I'm going to fetch them, the neat wee things! they're just a picture to look at!"

"Like their fabricator," said the worthy John Harbuckle, slowly and quietly, as if stating the driest fact.

"Thanks," Jessie threw back from the door; "pretty speeches don't often come my way." And she vanished as Alison had already done.

"More vivacious than her poor mother ever was!" sighed John Harbuckle, as he leaned forward with his broad palms outstretched to the blaze for some minutes, all alone.

Then the girls came back.

He looked up, they were busy about the room; both, to him, very charming, with their little red and black plaid shawls pinned over their shoulders.

"Now, Uncle John, mother won't mind our beginning before she comes in," said Alison, when all was arranged. "She said we were not to wait; she'll be back directly. There, now, what do you think of Jessie's scones?"

"I tell you better in a minute or two; Mrs. Robbins has made me over fastidious," said he, drawing his chair up to the table, and choosing one of Jessie's "neat wee things," which he buttered and tasted with critical deliberation. "Mrs. Robbins must hide her diminished head, Jessie," he said, when he had formed his opinion. "These homely cakes please me better than all her divers subtleties in the way of sweets. You will make them for me sometimes?"

"Perhaps," said Jessie. "Is it quite settled that we are to go?"

"Quite settled as far as I am concerned," returned John Harbuckle. "Do you think I could face my solitary hearth after having been an actor in this charming scene? No; I shall want scones and my nieces every morning with my breakfast. Rooms look very empty without girls; nothing else furnishes them."

"Then you are only going to consider us as goods and chattels?" asked Jessie, with a slight pretence at displeasure.

"My dear child! girls are the most valuable creatures in the world!" said Uncle John, as if deprecating Jessie's last remark.

"I'm thankful to hear it," said Jessie.

They had just finished breakfast when Mrs. Bayliss arrived.

"Well, John!"

"Well, Mary!" then followed a kiss by no means demonstrative.

"A bitter wind, John."

"Take this chair by the fire, auntie," said Jessie. "You look cold."

"No, I won't turn you out; besides, I rarely sit near the fire. I'm used to being in the cold by this time," said Mary, taking off her hat and then sitting at the end of the table.

She looked then neither lovely nor amiable. Her usual bald effect was heightened by the want of her hemstitched collar, which Jessie perceiving went to fetch; although she herself seemed quite callous about her appearance. "Nothing mattered now," she said only too often.

The presence of her brother at that time was far from soothing, it

was an offence to her. She drank her first cup of coffee amidst a silence no one dared to disturb.

Jessie came in with the collar and cuffs, but Mary, although she saw them plainly enough, did not attempt to take them from her niece. So they had to repose on the sofa.

Jessie went to her place at the table and the silence grew profound as well as irksome.

Presently Mrs. Bayliss put her hand into her pocket, and drew out a little packet enclosed in a newspaper wrapper.

"Here, Alison," she said, handing the packet to Jessie *en route* to the person to whom it was addressed, "this is for you; it's the only thing the postman brought this morning."

Alison, who was in the act of pouring out Jessie's second cup, filled it much too full.

She took the packet and hurriedly tearing off the wrapper, unrolled two long strips of printed paper, at the sight of which she flushed up to the very roots of her hair.

"Your proof, Alison?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I suppose so," she returned, under her breath, looking at the strips that curled about as if alive, with eyes that had suddenly grown very bright with amazement and delight.

She had heard of "proofs" of course, but that a real "proof" should ever be addressed to her was something too wonderful; it quite dazed her for the moment.

Uncle John looked at her with deep interest. "Your 'Border Towers?'" he asked.

She found the heading; sure enough it was her own paper—her very own! She wanted to rush away with it at once, and make the acquaintance of this first child of her brain and pen in the secrecy of her own room; but there she was inexorably tied to the breakfast-table; she could not get away.

"Accept my congratulations, my dear," said John Harbuckle kindly.

"Ah, your poor father had bitter cause to lament that he ever saw a proof," sighed Mrs. Bayliss. "I hope, Alison, your literary career may be a brighter one than his."

But Alison hardly heard this remark, so intent was she upon reading here and there a well-remembered sentence, which brought to her the conviction that those printed words were indeed her very own.

"You bring good luck, Uncle John," she said presently, turning her bright face, still trembling with amazement, to him.

"Well, well, let's take this as a good omen," said he. "London will be a vast field for you."

"I'm sure I shall be thankful for success of any kind," sighed Mrs. Bayliss. "Alison, my dear," she added, trying to speak kindly, "I see you're anxious to go over that. Tell Janet to

light the drawing-room fire; Uncle John and I have a good deal to talk over."

Thus dismissed Alison went off, Jessie following close behind her.

"Look here, Alison," said Jessie, as soon as they were in the hall, "don't trouble about the drawing-room, I'll see to that; you be off to our room; you'll not feel cold, I'm sure."

So Alison went to her room, shut to the door, fell down on her knees with the proof in her hand all waving about, gave thanks with the most devout and tender joy; and a faint sunbeam stole out from under the grey clouds and fell upon her and warmed her as she knelt there. Never if she lives to patriarchal age, never, should it be given her to write world-famous books, will she forget with what happy maternal gratitude she read through her first proof.

Jessie did not like being left unprotected, so, instead of returning to the breakfast table, she went into the drawing-room, where she employed herself in putting things to rights, and in trying to make up her mind whether or not she wanted to go to London, and whether she were glad or not that Mac Carruthers had come back.

"Eminent literary lady, may I come in?" she called, tapping at Alison's door after the lapse of half-an-hour or so, during which time Alison had read through her proof three times, and, finding several phrases needing correction, had resolved to consult Uncle John on the all-important matter of getting them right.

"Oh, come in!" answered Alison with another blush; for on points on which she was sensitive the slightest word made her quiver.

"But I'm so dreadfully frightened, talented authoress!" called Jessie through the keyhole in mock terror.

"Illustrious heroine, will you enter, or will you be an idiot?" returned Alison. Thus adjured, Jessie came in, to find Alison standing by the window with the strips of paper still in her hands.

"Mrs. Jellaby, please am I to do all the work of Bleak House this morning? If I may venture to ask so practical a question," said Jessie. "Come, you must have read those curly-whirlies by this time."

"I do believe Mr. Baird has been altering some of my sentences!" exclaimed Alison; a suspicion she had had for some time suddenly becoming conviction.

"Oh, the traitor! won't I pay his boy out for it!" said Jessie; "but really, Alison, it's getting late—it's just upon nine; let's get tidied up a bit before auntie and Uncle John begin to run all over the place. Come, Mrs. Jellaby!"

"You sha'n't call me bad names! I'm sure I'm always tidying up. I make a much better pudding than you do, although you are professionally a domestic woman and I'm not; but—I wish Mr. Baird hadn't altered my sentences!"

"Improved as well as altered them."

"Perhaps; but I like them to be mine. 'An ill-favoured thing but mine own,'" said Alison.

"There's a good deal in that," said Jessie, more seriously. "I like things to be mine own; and, as for people, to be mine own is a good quality that covers all deficiencies." She paused a moment and then went on as if offering some sort of apology. "But I couldn't help being pleased to see Uncle John this morning, you know, and I think he was pleased that I was pleased, wasn't he? Still I don't want to be taken away from Birrendale just yet."

"I wish Mac Carruthers had kept away altogether! What can you see in him? A more thoroughly uninteresting young man I never met. I should tire of him in two minutes."

"So should I of your wretched 'Border Towers,' 'A poor thing but mine own!'" said Jessie, turning away her head a little.

"Don't you be too sure!"

"Well, I suppose he is a trifle flirtful, but then—so am I. It doesn't mean anything; one must have someone to talk to; life's so dreary when there's no one about."

"I don't find it so," said Alison, vigorously shaking up the bed they had begun to make. Nor was it at that moment, for her thoughts were crowding fast and thick just then, so stirred had they been by those strips of printed paper.

"Then as you're so happy and contented," said Jessie, "when we've finished the rooms, you'd better make the pudding, and I'll go and look if there's anything for soupage left in the garden."

"McQuade brought in every bit he could find yesterday."

"I'd rather trust my own eyes," said Jessie.

So saying, she put on her hat and jacket and went out. Not, however, into the steep kitchen garden behind the house, but down the moss-grown braeside path that led to the Birren. There, sheltered by the thick evergreen woods, through which ran a never-silent bourn, the polypodies had flourished bright and green all the long winter; and there a few early primroses were blooming.

Jessie gathered a handful of leaves and blossoms, and stole cautiously down to the little stone bridge under which the bourn was singing its last song before it fell into the river and lost its own identity.

On this little bridge Jessie stood awhile, and she looked this way and she looked that, first to her right along by the riverside, then to the left among the spaces between the ashy grey stems of the great beeches that grew on one bank of the stream, then she turned to the narrow winding path she had just descended, then to the tall firs and heavy spruces that grew on the opposite bank. Not a human being could she see anywhere, nor hear any sound, except the last song of the bourn and the rushing of the brown white-crested river.

"It's far too early for Mac Carruthers, and there'll be never a fish

caught to-day!" she said to herself, and again she looked this way and that, but saw no one.

"It's far too early," she said to herself again, "and I wish Mac Carruthers had stayed away altogether. Who's that yonder by the silver firs?" And she looked eagerly along the river path, and half turned to run away up the braeside.

"It's just the water bailiff; if so, I'll go home again." And she began to retrace her steps, stopping now and then to gather some leaf deeply stained with orange or scarlet.

A footfall presently startled her, she turned with heightened colour half expecting to meet Mac Carruthers; but instead of seeing the young man, she only beheld the boy Baird, the minister's son, a lad of about eighteen, whose studies were, unfortunately, too often disturbed by visions of Miss Jessie Bayliss. He had been following close behind the water bailiff, and had seen Jessie on the bridge and had hurried to meet her.

"How are ye?" he asked, as he came up to Jessie, in a curious sing-song intonation.

"I'm just nipped up with the cold," said Jessie, pulling hard at a long trail of minute ivy as she spoke, and never vouchsafing him so much as one glance of her eyes.

Without a word, "the boy Baird," as the girls always called him, plunged his hand into his pocket, drew out his knife, and cut the ivy.

"Thanks," said Jessie, rising from her stooping position, and turning to him with a smile that nearly slew him on the spot.

"Maggie says you're going south," he stammered, for he had been all but deprived of speech by the radiant glance of thanks.

"How did Maggie come to hear of it?" asked Jessie.

"She heard it yesterday when she and mother called at Mrs. Carruthers's. 'Twill be just dreary without you!" said the lad.

"It's dreary enough, even with me, I'm thinking," said Jessie.

"And I can't stay out in the wind any longer, so just climb up and get me some of those polypodies, and then gather me a handful or two of primroses, there's a good fellow, for Uncle John is here to-day, and we must have something pretty for the table."

"All right!" exclaimed Baird, who, much prompter in action than in speech, at once began to get out of his ulster, that he might climb the better.

So Jessie went in with such spoils as she had already collected, leaving Baird, who ought to have been on his way to the tutor's, with whom he was cramming, scrambling up a tree that had a very green and mossy trunk, and dragging down the polypodies with an energy that leads one to suspect that his father's interferences with Mrs. Bayliss's affairs was not absolutely disinterested.

The fact was that young Baird's description of the privations the girls had endured, together with the time the lad wasted, had

determined the clergyman to write that letter. Mr. Baird had not, however, thought fit to confide this to his son.

Jessie entered the house by the back door. In the kitchen she found Alison stoning raisins for a pudding.

"Well, where are the vegetables?" Alison asked, as Jessie came in, with nothing more substantial than ivy and primroses in her hands.

"I don't know," said Jessie. "But, anyhow, we'll have fine decorations, for the boy Baird is hard at work out on the brae. He'll be round here directly."

And so he was, with his folded ulster full of leaves and primroses. He stood proudly on the red door-step, and rang the bell with a vehemence peculiar to himself.

"There's your slave," said Alison; and off went Jessie to reduce him to a still more abject condition by her gratitude.

"Oh, thanks—thanks! You've done nobly!" she said. And she took the folded cloak and its treasures into her arm, thereby making herself into a picture so admirable that the poor boy was ready to fall down and kiss the ground at her feet, when, behold, whom should they see trotting round the corner and along the broad drive beside the great banks of rhododendron but Mr. Malcolm Carruthers himself, on his cousin Alec's horse.

Now Jessie was perfectly aware that, standing there in the doorway, her arms full of green fronds and pale primroses, with her boyish adorer gazing at her, she made a charming something to look at among the surrounding bleak bareness; so that, in spite of the cutting wind, she stayed there to welcome Mac Carruthers.

The picture wanted no interpreter for Mac—Jessie was charming, the boy too young to make Mac jealous.

Mac rode quickly up to the door.

"Good morning, Miss Bayliss!" he said. "I've brought you a little offering."

The boy suddenly turned round and looked as if he would have slain him. Mac noticed the ferocity of his expression; it amused him intensely.

"All my friends are remembering me to-day," said Jessie brightly. Which little speech made the poor boy think her more of a goddess than ever; it was so kind of her to put him among her friends.

"Who could forget you?" asked Carruthers gallantly.

"Some people find it easy enough," said Jessie.

"Look here—just let me put these down! Geordie Baird will be needing his coat;" and she turned swiftly away and ran into the kitchen, where she deposited the boy's present on the table.

"Oughtn't you to be at your tutor's, young man?" asked Mac, as soon as Jessie had disappeared, looking down at the boy.

"What's that to you?" returned the lad, with an angry flush.

"I don't like to see your father imposed upon—that's all," said Mac. A remark which completely shut the boy up.

"Here, Georgie, and thank you very much," said Jessie, handing him his coat.

"Thank you, and good morning," said young Baird; and he went off abruptly and hurried over the lawn and the braeside.

"That's a cub that wants a little licking!" remarked Mac.

"He's just a boy," said Jessie compassionately.

"Yes, I often wonder how one gets over the degradation of having once been just a boy one's self. Now here's my offering. Take this basket and look in it. I've robbed the conservatory to an extent that will bring down vials of wrath upon my head."

"How lovely!" exclaimed Jessie, opening the basket and peeping into it. "I haven't seen such things for years, for centuries!"

"You've Mr. Harbuckle with you?" asked Mac.

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Oh, McQuade told our Allan Bell; and so my aunt sent this to Mrs. Bayliss with her kind regards and that sort of thing. We had a fine fish sent us yesterday from the Tay, and as we knew that there's nothing but a haddie to be found in all Kirkhope town to-day, we thought it would come in handy. They told Bell to come over with it; but I upset that little arrangement, and brought it myself."

"Well, it's just awfully kind of Mrs. Carruthers to think of us," said Jessie. "Please tell her so."

"Then I'm to have no thanks, I suppose," said Mac, as if aggrieved.

"Why should you be thanked for pleasing yourself?" asked Jessie, with a very pronounced smile.

"I'll go away, then, and never come back any more." And Mac, who had been bending down from his horse, straightened himself as if about to ride away that instant.

"I wish you had never come back at all!" said Jessie, turning her face away a little and showing the drawing of her throat and chin to very great advantage.

"Oh! Can you call yourself a truthful girl?" asked Mac, as if terribly shocked.

"I can't stand in this wind any longer," said Jessie. "Thank Mrs. Carruthers. Good-bye."

"Won't you ask me in?"

"No, indeed! Besides, I can't. Thank Mrs. Carruthers. Good-bye." And she retreated a few steps with the basket in her hand.

"Good-bye. But look here. I may come for the basket on Monday, mayn't I?" pleaded Mac.

"Good-bye," said Jessie, with decision. "I've nothing more to say to you. Thank Mrs. Carruthers very much. Good-bye."

"Oh, thank *me* a little, just a little!"

But the inexorable Jessie only shook her head.

"I wish you'd go away!" she said.

"All right, then. But remember—

"'How merrily lives a fair young knight,
Who—et cetera, et cetera;'"

and taking her at her word, he turned his horse towards the path by the rhododendrons and rode off, but not without turning once or twice, and the last time he turned he fancied he saw the top of Jessie's head just outside the door.

As soon as he was out of sight, Jessie was sorry she had not kept him chattering there a little longer.

"Why did I send him away? What possessed me?" she asked herself.

Who can tell? Such are the ways of girls.

"Jessie! Jessie! For heaven's sake, child, shut that door!" she heard her aunt calling; but John Harbuckle, who was at that moment leaving the dining-room, caught Miss Jessie taking a furtive last look round the corner.

"Who is the young man?" he asked his sister the next time they were alone.

"Oh, they're only playing!" said Mrs. Bayliss. "Jessie will play!"

"A dear girl! But very different from her mother," thought John Harbuckle. "My Jessie seldom played."

While Jessie had been alternately tormenting and delighting her lovers, and Alison had been busy about household matters, poor Uncle John had been having a very bad little quarter of an hour with his sister Mary.

At first Mrs. Bayliss had been dignified, then tearful, then reproachful, then indignant; now she cut him to the heart by asking him how he could tear her away from her husband's grave in the cemetery on the other side of the river; then she tapped his nerves by the contempt with which she spoke of the City, his City, his dear London City, the object of his tenderest, most ideal affection, and by the ruthless way in which she tried to set their long past childhood, around which he had fondly thrown a softening haze, in the hardest, crudest, most realistic light.

"Well, well, Mary," said John at last, "if you find that you really can't be happy in——"

"I can be happy nowhere!" she exclaimed.

"If you find you really can't be comfortable in London"—with an emphasis on the changed adjective——

"I don't call Tower Hill London. You must know it's quite out of the London world."

"Why, then, you can take a little place near Woolwich, where you

can have as many military friends as you like. I am sorry that civilians are so——”

“They’re detestable to me; they have no manners! It’s been a grief to me all my life through that I am so unfortunately connected with City people. I hoped when I married my poor James that I had done with the City altogether; but alas! there was the same dreadful commercial element in his character too, poor fellow. He would think he understood business; that was the terrible mistake he made. Poor Arthur’s failure and death were thrown away upon him. Although I’m sure I don’t know what could have made him so eager for business. I’m sure I can conscientiously say I always tried my hardest to set him against it.”

“There I quite believe you,” said John drily. “How is it, then, that you are still so anxious to keep on this losing concern?”

“John, how can you dare—how can you,” she sobbed, “how can you d-dare to ask me such a question? Don’t you suppose that if I’d have been with him on a sinking ship I’d have g-g-gone down with him? But you can’t understand; you can’t enter into the feelings of married people; you’re a bachelor!”

“And necessarily a brute,” put in John.

“I didn’t mean that,” said Mary through her tears; “I only meant that unmarried people can’t understand married ones. And I was never easy to understand. There was but one man who ever did understand me, and now he’s gone!”

Mary began wandering aimlessly up and down the dining-room, pausing now and then to gaze at the precious books of the late Captain, which were to be found all over the house in a way both irritating and affecting to her brother, who sat bending towards the fire with something like tears in his eyes, feeling very much tempted to offer his all to throw after what had been already lost.

“I think, Mary, I’ll try and get a nap,” he said at length, when he felt that the prowling of his sister was almost more than he could bear.

“Very well,” assented Mary, as if nothing on earth were of the slightest consequence to her, and as her brother slowly rose and crossed the room she never so much as turned towards him.

“Poor Mary!” sighed John Harbuckle to himself as he gently closed the door behind him.

It was at that very moment that he caught sight of Jessie peering round the corner. He passed on along the corridor to his own room without speaking to her. He had heard talking and laughing and the ringing of a horse’s hoofs. He understood what it all meant pretty well.

“She, too, doesn’t want to go, I suppose,” he said; “but this time I must be firm. It won’t do; they mustn’t be allowed to ruin themselves. If I can help it they shall not.”

So he carried out his programme in spite of all opposition. Before

he left for London on Tuesday evening he had arranged for the sale of the farm, the letting of the house, the satisfying of the man at Glasgow, and the carrying on of the housekeeping until Cauldknowe could be left.

The feeble little sunbeam that had so tenderly encircled Alison as she returned thanks for her first success was the harbinger of many others, that struggled through the dark grey clouds until they gained strength and numbers sufficient to chase the long winter away altogether.

The sun shone on Birrendale ; the sky grew bright, the tops of the dark evergreens became brilliant with new growth. The stream was in good order for fishing, and Mac Carruthers, who had haunted its banks when the foaming river was the colour of terra-cotta, now appeared to dwell there in perpetuity, and Mac was an uncommonly successful fisherman. When others had been all day at work and had taken nothing, Mac would come down for a quarter of an hour and charm a dozen or so of trout or herling into his basket, and when never a salmon had been seen in the stream for weeks, Mac would be sure to land the first that managed to escape the nets at the river's mouth and to leap the "calls" by the mill dams.

There was generally now a dish of toothsome herlings—a delicious little pink-flesh fish peculiar, so they say, to the border streams—upon Mrs. Bayliss's breakfast-table whenever the water was at all in order.

"How do you get them? Other people don't," asked Jessie one day.

"Oh," said Mac gaily, "we've made a little arrangement. It's 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,' and I whistle and they just come. They like me to catch them, that's the fact of it."

"Silly little herlings!" said Jessie.

"Not at all," said Mac; "they know I catch them a great deal better than other people do. Besides, think of the honour of being eaten by you! Happy little herlings, I should say!"

In those days Mac and Jessie saw a good deal of each other; not that Mac used to stay fishing at the braefoot by the hour together, but that he used to come pretty nearly every day.

Was it all play between them?

Mac Carruthers would just then have found life rather sad if it had not been for that little bit of fishing, in spite of his own great stores of strong vitality.

His cousin, Alec Carruthers, was in delicate health; consumption had been feared at one time. He was a few years younger than Mac, whom he regarded as one of the most splendid beings this world has ever seen, and without exception the grandest nurse.

"Make haste back; I weary so when you're away!" were generally his last words when Mac bade him good-bye.

It was depressing in the house. No sooner was Mac on horse-

back, or in the dog-cart, on his way to Jessie, than he felt a violent re-action; playing with Jessie, if it were play, was simply the most delicious experience that Mac Carruthers had ever yet known. It was quite as delightful to Jessie. She always knew when Mac was at the foot of that brae. A sort of instinct I suppose it was that told her; for Mac came at all manner of odd times; just when he could best get free to leave Muirhead.

"I shall cry when you take me away from here, I know I shall!" Jessie used to say very often to Alison, but never to Mac; oh no, never to Mac! At least not in those days, just after John Harbuckle had gone home.

"For," said she to herself, "men are naturally always too conceited, without being flattered like that! and besides—besides—I really couldn't tell him! How could I?"

"Well, yes, I don't know how it is, but I really am an uncommonly lucky beggar in other things beside catching salmon and herling," Mac said to Jessie one day.

She had come down the brae just as the sun was setting, and the red beams had fallen on her bright hair and made it so luminous that Mac, turning round at the sound of her footsteps, had been struck almost blind by it; so he declared, with how much truth it is not for me to say.

"I can't see to fish any longer," he had said, and so they both strolled about the banks and talked. Then it was that Jessie had asked him how he managed to succeed when others failed; then it was he had gone on about being "a lucky beggar."

"Lucky!" said Jessie; "I always understood you were a signal failure! Everyone except your cousin Alec says so!"

"Ah! but that's just the luck of it!" he answered. "I'm always making what other people call 'failures' (relatives, you know, always think you ought to be able to make bricks without either straw or clay, their opinions don't count); but the odd part of it is, my failures are always better to me than other people's successes are to them. I'm like the Chinese tumbling toys, throw me down which way you like I always right myself. For instance, you may say, my not passing for the Civil Service was a failure. Granted; but then if I had passed I might never have come down here and seen you."

"That might have been just as well for both of us," said Jessie.

"For you perhaps, but certainly not for me," said Mac fervently. "Indeed," he went on, "when I think how nearly I was not going to a certain ever-memorable ball, I feel quite frightened. But there was my luck again, you see! Well, then, if I hadn't failed, my cousin Alec would not have had the benefit of my devoted care all the winter, and might have been in a consumption by this time; you see what a fine thing both to myself and others my 'failure,' as my multitudinous relatives persist in calling it, has already turned out! I say *already*," and he suddenly looked up at Jessie, with that merry,

merry twinkle of his own in his eyes ; but somehow, that twinkle softened a moment after, in a way that made Jessie's colour rise.

"I say *already*, because—" and he slightly hesitated—"who knows what happiness—what—what—that is, as it was the excuse of my meeting you, I can never be thankful enough for it, I mean."

"You might have said the same, and I dare say you did say the same, to the lovely Viennese girls, to a dozen of them at Nice. You wouldn't have gone to Nice if you hadn't failed, you know," said Jessie. "That was another good thing, wasn't it?"

"I admit Nice was very jolly, and that they were perfection. But then I don't care for perfection. I don't consider you perfect, far from it. You won't say that you're sorry you're going to London?"—the last sentence rather wistfully.

"Why should I?" asked Jessie ; but not looking up, although he was looking down.

"You are sorry a wee bit? Just a wee bit?" said he, lowering his voice. "Come, make haste and tell me! There are Mrs. Bayliss and your cousin half-way down the brae. Not just a wee bit?"

"Oh, nonsense! Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried Jessie, rousing herself. "Good-bye! Good-bye! That is, you'd better come and say 'How d'you do?' to aunt!"

And these two ingenuous young people walked towards the others as if they had only that very instant met by the merest chance.

"No doubt," observed Alison to Jessie later, "no doubt it was only the sunset that had given you both such a glowing colour. But you looked very nice ; I liked to see you—both of you!"

(To be continued.)

"IN THE BEGINNING."

(Concluded.)

III.

THE third or Tertiary Epoch of the Creation of the World introduces an altogether new order of things in the animal kingdom. As in the Primary epoch crustaceans and fishes were the only living things, and in the Secondary epoch reptiles predominate, so in the Tertiary epoch mammals took their place upon the earth. Fishes and reptiles still remained, though some of their orders were extinct and other new orders created.

Among the new reptiles were Salamanders as large as crocodiles. Birds, too, of song and of prey, were in plenty, though inferior in number to the mammals. During this epoch the earth was fairly crowded with life, as the immense number of remains show. The agglomerated remains of the shells of microscopic mollusca, forming in some places beds hundreds of feet thick, testify to the swarms of life which filled the seas.

The Tertiary epoch is divided into three distinct periods, called by Sir Charles Lyell the Eocene, the Miocene, and the Pliocene.

Lecoq thus describes the vegetation of the Eocene period: "The lower tertiary period," he says, "constantly reminds us of the tropical landscapes of the present epoch, in localities where water and heat together impress on vegetation a power and majesty unknown in our climates. The Algæ, which have already been observed in the marine waters at the close of the Cretaceous period, represented themselves under still more varied forms in the earlier Tertiary deposits, when they have been formed in the sea. Hepaticas and mosses grew in the more humid places; many pretty ferns vegetated in the same. The fresh waters are crowded with *Naiades*, *Chara*, *Potamogeton*, *Canlinites*, and *Zosterites*, and with *Halochloris*. Their leaves, floating or submerged, like those of our aquatic plants concealed legions of molluscs, whose remains have also reached us. Great numbers of Conifers lived during this period. M. Brongniart enumerates forty-one different species, which, for the most part, remind us of living forms with which we are familiar—of pines, cypresses, thuyas, junipers, firs, yews and ephedra. Palms mingled with these groups of evergreen trees. Creeping plants, such as the *Cucumites variabilis*, and the numerous species of *Cupanioides*, twined their slender stems round the trunks, doubtless ligneous of various *Leguminaceæ*. The family of *Betulaceæ*, of the order *Cupulifera*, show the form, then new, of *Quercus*, the oak. Trees predominate here,

as in the preceding period, but the great numbers of aquatic plants of the period are quite in accordance with the geological facts, which show that the continents and islands were intersected by extensive lakes and inland seas, while vast marine bays and arms of the sea penetrated deeply into the land."

It is evident that in the Tertiary epoch the earth's crust was sufficiently cooled, so that the surface was no longer greatly affected by internal heat, and there was a consequent development of various latitudes. Nevertheless, most of the vegetation of the Eocene period is tropical in its character, and some of it remains to us to this day in the islands of Australasia. The mammals were also of the order that at the present time are found only in warm latitudes.

The first mammals, with the exception of the Marsupials, were the Pachyderms, to which family the elephants of the present day belong. The representatives of the family were, however, far superior in size and in number of varieties to those with which we are familiar. In the plaster quarries of Paris, Montmartre and Pantin, are to be found vast quantities of their remains. Every block taken from these quarries encloses some fragment of a bone of these huge monsters.

It was from the fossils furnished by these quarries that Cuvier made his studies, and finally succeeded in restoring several, and defining their appearance and habits.

The *Palaeotherium* was one of the animals which Cuvier identified and described. It bore points of resemblance to the horse, the rhinoceros and the tapir. There were many species of them of different sizes. The nose terminated in a muscular fleshy trunk, or rather snout, the eyes were small, the head large, the body squat, thick and short; the legs short and stout.

The *Arioplotherium* was another animal which Cuvier has discovered for us. It was about the size of the ass. What would have distinguished it most must have been an enormous tail, of at least three feet in length, and very thick at its junction with the body. The tail evidently served it as a rudder and propeller when swimming in the lakes or rivers; for Cuvier decides that in its habits it must have resembled the hippopotamus and other quadrupeds which frequent the water.

The *Xiphodon* seems to be a species of hornless deer. Cuvier says: "Like all active herbivorous animals, it was probably timid, and with large and very mobile ears, like those of the stag."

These animals were all herbivorous in habits. It is curious to consider that at this period there were few or no carnivorous mammals. The earth was filled with huge creatures which browsed the herbage of the plain and the succulent plants, and lived in quiet and harmony.

It was at this period that the *Nummulites* existed in the bosom of the seas, far from shore. The shelly agglomerates of these Protozoan Rhizopods now constitute very important rocks. In the chain of the

Pyrenees the *Nummulite* limestone forms entire mountains of great height. It was of these rocks that the pyramids were built in Egypt.

The vegetation of the Miocene period was still tropical in character, though indicating an approach, in some latitudes, to a cooler temperature. The primeval forests of South America furnish even at this day, no doubt, a tolerably accurate idea of the vegetation of that period. These were palms, bamboos, laurels, maples, walnut trees, beeches, elms and oaks, all growing with tropical luxuriance, and bound and woven together by magnificent vines.

Now, for the first time, are discovered carnivora among mammals. Apes, bats, dogs, and other new species make their appearance. Bats, dogs and coati inhabited Brazil and Guiana, rats ranged North America. There were genetters, marmots, squirrels and opossums. Thrushes, sparrows, storks, flamingoes and crows were added to the list of birds. Snakes, frogs and salamanders abounded in the marshes, and perch and shad appeared in the lakes and rivers.

The largest terrestrial mammal that ever lived belonged to this period. The name of *Dinotherium* has been given to it. Though this name signifies "terrible animal," yet its habits seem to have been peaceful enough. It is supposed to have inhabited the marshes bordering fresh-water lakes and rivers, and to have lived on roots and plants. Though much larger than the elephant, it bore a strong likeness to that animal. It probably had a proboscis similar to the elephant's. Its tusks, however, instead of proceeding out of its mouth, grew, bent downward, from the lower jaw, and though no doubt of use as weapons of defence, were especially intended as a powerful natural mattock for penetrating the soil, and tearing up the roots upon which it fed.

The *mastodon* was similar in size and appearance to the elephant of to-day. Its body was somewhat longer, and its limbs a little thicker. Numerous remains of mastodons have been found in North America, especially in the regions of the Ohio and Hudson rivers. Two complete skeletons have been formed from the remains of mastodons, one of which is on exhibition in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, the other was sent to London. A single fossil tooth of a mastodon weighed about seventeen pounds.

The North American aborigines called the mastodon "the father of the ox," and there are numerous traditions which indicate that these creatures were in existence up to a comparatively recent period in the world's history. America abounds in remains of mastodons, but few bones have been found in Europe. They seem most plentiful in that country in the Val d'Arno, and a magnificent skeleton was discovered at Turin.

The remains of the vegetable world of the Miocene period are found in the shape of a certain imperfect or spurious coal called *lignite*. It is utilised in many countries in the place of coal. The beds of this coal are of various degrees of thickness, from a few

inches to above twenty yards. Yellow amber is found with this lignite. It is the mineralised resin which flowed from certain extinct pine trees of the Tertiary epoch. This amber is washed up by the waves of the Baltic Sea, and has for ages formed quite an article of commerce. In this fossil gum are frequently inclosed insects and other extraneous bodies, where they have been preserved in their original colour and integrity of form.

The marine deposits of the Miocene period are beds of soft clay and shelly marl. The soft clay deposits include sandstone, much used for building purposes. This marine formation is sometimes succeeded by a fresh-water deposit of a whitish and partly siliceous limestone. The shelly marl deposits are formed of broken shells and corals, and the corresponding fresh-water deposits contain numerous remains of the contemporaneous animal kingdom. This shelly marl is extensively used for fertilising land.

The Pliocene period or third subdivision of the Tertiary epoch was marked by a wonderful change in the manifestations of nature, and consequently by wonderful geographical alterations. The world had, up to this period, been divided into land and water, but with the land more or less level. Mountains had hitherto been unknown. But now came terrible subterranean convulsions. The outer crust was cooled and hardened, and as the boiling and seething mass within needed vent through which the compressed steam might escape, the hardened crust would be forced upward and a volcano would burst forth. It is believed, there being strong presumptive evidence in favour of the fact, that up to this period, the portion of the earth now occupied by Europe was a vast sea filled, perhaps, by numerous islands of more or less extent. The European continent gradually emerged from this deep, while the chains of mountains were forced upward by an internal force. Fossil shells are found upon the Pyrenees at a height of eight thousand feet; on the Alps at a height of ten thousand feet; while in Sicily, the newer Pliocene rocks, covering nearly half the surface of the island, are raised from two thousand to three thousand feet above the level of the sea. In the Andes and the Himalayas the same evidence is found of their having been raised upward by volcanic action, as fossil shells are found on the former at a height of thirteen thousand feet, and on the latter at eighteen thousand feet. In the central Alps Cretaceous, Oolitic, Liassic and Eocene strata are found at the loftiest summits. Oolitic and Cretaceous strata have been raised twelve thousand feet, Eocene ten thousand feet, and Miocene four thousand and five thousand feet above the level of the sea. Equally striking proofs of recent elevation are found in the Apennines, the celebrated Carrara marble turning out to be an altered limestone of the Oolitic series, and the underlying crystalline rocks to be metamorphosed secondary sandstones and shales.

During this last period, which precedes our own epoch, the

temperature of the earth was gradually cooling, and the vegetation was being modified accordingly. Consequently, we find a striking similarity between the flora of that period and that of the present. The predominating character of vegetation is the abundance of the group of the *Amentaceæ*. Conifers still numbered thirty-two varieties; of maple there were twelve varieties; of oak, three; while willows, beeches, birches, magnolias and other modern trees abounded. The palms totally disappeared from Europe.

Among the mammals which existed during this period we find the mastodon, which I have already described as existing during the preceding period. The hippopotamus, the horse, the camel, the ox and the deer, are among the animals then existing which survive to the present day. The fossil horse presents the greatest resemblance to existing horses though only about one-third its present size. The rhinoceros differed somewhat in having two horns instead of one. There was also a dwarf species about the size of a common hog. There were also intermediate species. The famous bird, the *roc*, which has played so important a part in Oriental tradition, originated in the discovery of the cranium and horns of a fossil rhinoceros. The famous dragons of western tradition had also a similar origin.

In the city of Klagenfurth, in Carinthia, is a fountain on which is sculptured the head of a monstrous dragon with six feet, and a head surmounted by a stout horn. According to the popular tradition, still prevalent at Klagenfurth, this dragon lived in a cave, whence it issued from time to time, to frighten and ravage the country. A bold cavalier kills the dragon, paying with his life for this proof of his courage. The head of the pretended dragon, killed by the valorous knight, is preserved in the Hôtel de Ville, and this head has furnished the sculptor for his fountain with a model for the head of his statue. Herr Unga, of Vienna, recognised at a glance the cranium of the fossil rhinoceros; its discovery in some cave had probably originated the fable of the knight and the dragon.

The *Sivatherium giganteum*, remains of which are found in certain provinces in India, had a body as bulky as that of an ox, and bore a strong resemblance to an elk.

The living salamanders are amphibious Batrachians, with smooth skins, and rarely attaining the length of twenty inches. The salamander of the Tertiary epoch had the dimensions of a crocodile. A skeleton of this reptile was found on the left bank of the Rhine, not far from Constance, in 1725. It was mistaken for the skeleton of a gigantic man, and Scheuchzar, a Swiss naturalist, published a description of the fossil, entitling it "*Homo diluvii testis*"—man, a witness of the deluge. Pierre Camper, a German naturalist, in 1787, corrected the error, though he himself mistook it for a Saurian. Cuvier finally settled the matter by plainly indicating to what order of beings it belonged.

Birds became exceedingly numerous. Vultures and eagles were

added to the rapacious birds, and gulls, swallows, ducks, pheasants, etc., filled the air and the water.

Dolphins and whales sported in the ocean, differing but slightly from the same orders of the present. An enormous fragment of a fossil whale was found in Paris, in 1779, in the cellar of a wine-merchant. Not being specially interested in natural history, the wine-merchant took the trouble to excavate only a part of the bone, yet that detached piece weighed two hundred and twenty-seven pounds.

At the close of the Tertiary epoch Europe and Asia must have presented nearly all the physical characteristics which distinguish them at the present day. The continents had assumed their present forms, but many lakes now dried up still existed. The mountains reared their heads and were covered with perpetual snow.

IV.

THE Quaternary Epoch, which follows upon the Tertiary Epoch, brings the history of the creation of the world almost down to our times. This Epoch has three chronological divisions: the European Deluges, the Glacial Period, and the Creation of Man, and subsequent Asiatic Deluge. Some geologists make two divisions, calling them the Post-Pliocene Period and the Recent or Pleistocene Period.

It must be understood that there were no strong demarcations between the epochs—no convulsions of nature to tell when one ended and another began. The changes of the earth went on gradually, and it was only when this slow and no doubt imperceptible progress had accomplished an entire revolution, or at least a radical change, in the condition of the earth, that one epoch gave place to another.

The beginning of the Post-Pliocene Period found the same flora and fauna upon the earth that had distinguished the Pliocene Period, and the physical features of the globe were still the same. Gigantic elephants still trod the earth, and the hippopotami and the two-horned rhinoceros lived in the rivers and morasses. There were three species of *Bos*, one of which was hairy and bore a mane; deer of gigantic size, and other animals, species of which still exist. We find a lion, as large as the largest African lion of the present day, which hunted its prey in the British jungles. The *Machairoches*, an animal of the feline race, was probably the most ferocious and destructive of the carnivora. There were bears, surpassing in size those of the Rocky Mountains, hyenas, and two species of beaver.

In a cavern in England some six hundred feet in length, have been found a large quantity of fossil bones belonging to all those animals.

The remains of the *Mammoth* are met with in all portions of the world, from the equator to the frigid zone. The mammoth was from sixteen to eighteen feet in height. Its monstrous tusks were from ten to fifteen feet in length, and were much curved, with a spiral turn

outward. Its body was thickly covered with long, shaggy hair, with a heavy mane upon its neck and back.

Fossil ivory was found in Greece at a very early period. Some of the bones of the elephant bear a strong resemblance to those of man, and have often been mistaken for human bones. Thus the Greeks took the patella of a fossil elephant for the knee-bone of Ajax.

Time and time again the world has been startled by the announcement of the finding of the remains of giants; but these remains have always, when examined by scientific men, proved to be those of the mammoth.

In 1663, the naturalist Leibnitz composed out of some remains which were brought to him a strange animal carrying a horn in the middle of its forehead, which he called the *fossil unicorn*. Investigation, however, proved that these remains belonged to the mammoth, and the horn was one of the creature's tusks thus fantastically located.

But the place where these remains are found most plentifully is on the northern coast of Siberia, though all through Russia they are more or less numerous. We are told by a traveller that an entire island in this locality, which is about a hundred miles in length, "except three or four small rocky mountains, is a mixture of ice and sand; and, as the shores fall, from the heat of the sun thawing them, the tusks and bones of the mammoth are found in great abundance. To use Chooïnoff's own expression, the island is formed of the bones of this extraordinary animal, mixed with the horns and heads of the buffalo, or something like it, and some horns of the rhinoceros."

New Siberia and the Lachen Islands, off the mouth of the river Lena, are, for the most part, an agglomeration of sand, ice, and the teeth and tusks of mammoths. The commerce in fossil ivory from these sources is an extensive and profitable one. Tusks are here found weighing from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds.

There is a tradition that these huge creatures lived and burrowed underground. This tradition is held in Russia and Siberia, and the same legend exists among the Chinese. This can hardly be accounted possible, however.

A Russian traveller gives an account of finding an entire mammoth's head frozen; and a still more extraordinary discovery was made by the Russian naturalist, Adams, in 1806. "In 1799, a Tungusian chief, while seeking for mammoth horns on the banks of the Lake Oncoul, perceived among the blocks of ice a shapeless mass, not at all resembling the large pieces of floating wood which are commonly found there. The following year he noticed that this mass was more disengaged from the blocks of ice and had two projecting parts, but he was still unable to make out what it could be. Toward the end of the following summer, one entire side of the animal and one of his tusks were quite free from the ice. But the succeeding summer of 1802, which was less warm and more windy than common, caused the mammoth to remain buried in the ice, which had scarcely melted

at all. At length, toward the end of the fifth year (1803), the ice between the earth and the mammoth having melted faster than the rest, the plane of its support became inclined, and this enormous mass fell by its own weight on a bank of sand."

Two years afterward, Mr. Adams found the huge creature in the same place, but somewhat mutilated, its flesh having been cut and torn away in many places, but its skeleton was intact. The head was covered with a dry skin, one of the ears was furnished with a tuft of hair, and the balls of the eyes were still distinguishable. Its back had a long flowing mane. Mr. Adams collected all that remained of the huge creature and sent it to the museum at St. Petersburg where it is still to be seen.

Germany abounds with fossil remains of these gigantic elephants. They are found in all parts of Europe, in Canada, Oregon, and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. The East Indies is almost the only country where they have not been discovered.

The most remarkable creatures of the Post-Pliocene Period were, however, the *Glyptodon*, the gigantic *Megatherium*, the *Mylodon*, and the *Megalonyx*. These were all edentates, living on insects and the tender leaves of plants.

The *Glyptodon* belonged to the Armadillo family, and was clothed in a hard scaly shell, or coat of mail. Specimens of this mammal have been found not less than nine feet in length. The *Schistopleuron* was similar in appearance and habits to the *Glyptodon*.

The *Megatherium*, remains of which are found in Paraguay, was allied to the existing genus of Sloths. It fed on roots, branches and leaves of trees, and burrowed deep in the ground. Its body was twelve or thirteen feet in length, and between five and six feet high. It was an enormous, heavily-built animal, armed with gigantic claws.

The *Mylodon* was also an edentate, resembling the Sloth.

The mineral deposits of this age are called "pre-glacial."

This epoch, like the one which precedes it, was characterised by violent changes in the appearance of the earth's surface. Land was suddenly elevated by an upward movement of the terrestrial crust, and thus chains of mountains were found. Again land suddenly or gradually sank below the sea level, perhaps to arise again at some distant period. These phenomena were always necessarily accompanied by inundations; the water disturbed by these unusual motions of the earth's crust, rushing in violent waves mingled with earth, sand and mud, and as it retreated leaving behind it the marks of its fury. Sometimes the rocky strata indicate many successive deposits. These deluges were, no doubt, comparatively frequent and local in their character. Two deluges, however, stand out prominent from the rest, as being more general. The first of these two occurred in the north of Europe, where it was produced by the upheaval of the mountains of Norway. The wave spread from thence and carried

its ravages into those regions now known as Sweden, European Russia and the north of Germany, sweeping before it all the loose soil on the surface, and covering the whole of Scandinavia with a mantle of transported soil.

The second European deluge is supposed to have been the result of the upheaval of the Alps. It has filled with débris and transported material the valleys of France, Germany and Italy, over a circumference which has the Alps for its centre.

These two deluges must have interfered seriously with animated nature. No doubt in this wholesale destruction many varieties became extinct. Numerous caves are found filled with the bones of all species of animals, which some geologists hold to have drifted into or sought refuge in the caves and perished during the general inundation.

Closely following these convulsions came a period even yet more destructive of animal and vegetable life. It is known as the glacial period, during which the northern and central parts of Europe which extend from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean and the Danube were visited by sudden and severe cold. The plains of Europe which had recently displayed a tropical vegetation, became covered with ice and snow. Science is yet unable to attribute an adequate cause to this sudden change in the temperature of the globe. Agassiz says of this period: "A vast mantle of ice and snow covered the plains, the valleys and the seas. All the springs were dried up; the rivers ceased to flow. To the movements of a numerous and animated creation succeeded the silence of death." Great numbers of animals perished from cold, and some races were entirely annihilated. Evidences of glacial action are found in all the regions of northern and central Europe. In England *erratic* blocks (as these stones are called which have wandered from any cause from their original bed) of granite are found which were derived from the mountains of Norway. These blocks were borne by a glacier across the Baltic and the North Seas. "Boulder" is another term for these erratic blocks. So that, wherever huge, smooth-worn stones are found at a distance from their parent-bed, it is safe to infer the action of glaciers.

Such extensive glaciers as we have reason to believe were in Europe at that period, could only have existed where the temperature of the air was several degrees below zero. So some idea of the intense cold may be formed. That it was sudden as well as intense is held by Cuvier, who says, speaking of the bodies of the quadrupeds which the ice had seized, and in which they have been preserved, with their hair, flesh and skin, up to the present time: "If they had not been frozen as soon as killed, putrefaction would have decomposed them; and, on the other hand, this eternal frost could not have previously prevailed in the place where they died; for they could not have lived in such a temperature. It was, therefore, at the same instant when these animals perished that the country that they

inhabited was rendered glacial. These events must have been sudden, instantaneous and without any gradation."

The glacial period had passed away and given place to a normal temperature when man was created. It is difficult to decide where man first appeared upon the scene. In India there is a tradition that at the head waters of the Indus, on the northern slopes of the Himalayas, humanity first made its appearance. It is certain that in this locality are still in existence evidences of the existence of a very rude race of men. Here are found a vast number of caves bearing traces of having been the dwellings of human beings before they had learned the art of building in its rudest forms.

Geologists are divided in opinion as to the exact period of man's appearance upon the earth. Flint knives have been found in bone-beds mixed up with fossil remains of elephants, rhinoceros, bears and other animals which existed prior to man, but no human bones are found. There are various theories as to the presence of these knives. Flint knives, together with human remains, have been found in various places, indicating very great antiquity. In the peat in Ireland great numbers of oval and spear-shaped instruments are found. In the midden heaps along the Scandinavian coast, consisting of cast-away shells, mixed with the bones of quadrupeds, birds and fishes, are found flint knives, pieces of pottery and ashes. Mounds are found in America showing a very ancient origin.

The chronological periods of pre-historic man have been designated the Age of Stone, the Age of Bronze, and the Age of Iron. It is an interesting study to trace out the slow yet sure progress which aboriginal man made in the arts and sciences. The witnesses of this progress are few yet undeniable. They are graven in the rock and imbedded in the ground. M. Marlot, a French scientist, assigns to the oldest or stone period, an age of from five thousand to seven thousand years, and to the bronze period from three thousand to four thousand; still there is no reliable data for estimating their exact extent.

The Asiatic deluge, which, according to the tradition of various nations, occurred about five thousand years ago, brings us to the close of the Quaternary Epoch. This deluge, though extensive, was still local in its character. We have the Jewish record of this Asiatic deluge in the seventh chapter of Genesis. The *Vedas*, the sacred books of the Hindoos, speak of this deluge, and Confucius speaks of the waters flowing back "which, being raised to the heavens, washed the feet of the highest mountains, covered the less elevated hills and inundated the plains."

AMONG THE BRIGANDS.

I.

I WILL tell you nothing about the scenery ; you can perfectly well construct it for yourself by throwing an unlimited amount of forest and crag into your mental kaleidoscope and shaking it into form at your leisure ; be sure that whatever combination you may turn out really exists somewhere or other, and that none, however wild, is not fully backed up by reality.

We arrived at nightfall—people always do manage to arrive at unheard-of destinations at the said hour, I suppose to get a foretaste of what is in store for them later—and as we entered the long straggling lane of dauby dwellings, benevolently dubbed a village, my very heart sank within me, and I felt more savagely out of temper with my husband than was quite consistent with the “love, honour and obey” of—well, no matter how many long years ago.

“What an awful place it must be in rainy weather,” I exclaimed to myself as I viewed the ruts, deep as if cut with a plough-share, on either side of our bullock-cart, and felt my very bones broken by the consequent jolts.

For our driver had thought fit to goad his animals into a triumphant trot in order to astonish the weak minds of the population drawn up on their mud thresholds to glare at the *forestieri* as they were hurried past. That driver must have been a very Napoleon in his way, heedless or oblivious of the agonies which his own personal ambition inflicted upon his fellow-creatures. I can see him now, his wild locks streaming over his shoulders, his black eyes gleaming, his tawny hands flourishing the cruel goad, his naked feet and legs capering amid the ruts of hard-caked mud as if he were dancing over a velvet pile ; while his unearthly shrieks and impossible apostrophes yet ring upon my ear as they did upon the eventful night of our advent at Roccanera.

We had to pass through the village in its entire length. It is true there were not fifty hovels in all ; but if you take into consideration the open space between each, our “progress,” despite the weird gymnastics of the driver, was sufficiently long, and it was with a sigh of real relief that we at last drew up before the “Palazzo,” which was to be our residence for, alas, a rather indefinite period of time.

Baron Sironi, its owner, had let us an apartment, and now stood there upon the steps ready to receive his new tenants.

“Palazzo” sounds grand, does it not ? I wish you could see how little of the palatial there was about the reality ! A scrambling,

shambling, rough stone building, architectural as a barn, less inviting than a penitentiary, with its endless staring windows. But we were kindly welcomed by our landlord, and on entering the house, found his family and entire household, from land-steward to scullery-maid, drawn up in the huge hall to receive us. The Baroness, a little dark woman, all gleaming eyes and teeth, stiff brocade and antique jewellery, smilingly made me a curtesy such as nothing but the German word *knix* can render; the daughter, a juvenile edition of mamma, minus the brocade and jewels, imitated her; after which the entire domestic staff passed in a sort of review order before us, and in spite of our amazed resistance, seized our hands in turn, which each kissed with a bend and a bow that fell little short of actual kneeling. I never felt so uncomfortable in my life, and as for John, his face had put on the colour of his own crimson lake.

The children, poor things, did not know whether to laugh or cry.

Thank heaven, it ended at last, and then we were shown up to our rooms by the fat Baron in person.

There was nothing in them more remarkable than the strange incongruity of bare white-washed walls with here and there a large oil painting in heavy gilt frame, curtainless windows and carpetless brick floors with antique, carved, velvet-covered sofas and chairs, and a massive old silver wash basin and ewer.

My bed was monumental in comfortless magnificence. Little smaller than a billiard table, piled up with layers of mattresses covered in silk, curtained in cherry-coloured satin with countless little penny pictures of saints, male and female, pinned all over the inside, a quilt to match and a set of pillows ditto.

"Am I to lay my head upon those?" I ruefully asked, pointing to the latter and going up to see if, perhaps, the sheets were of the same goose-fleshy material.

"Oh, no, signora," answered the smiling hand-maiden, "those are only for show. Here," opening a drawer, "are those for use."

It was a pleasing relief. So was also the discovery of linen sheets in place of the much dreaded silk or satin. And with all this barbaric magnificence, cracked water-bottles and dingy green tumblers, priceless Capo di Monte vases, and towels resembling pocket-handkerchiefs.

Ah, thought I, looking around, if the frequenters of Wardour Street could only see the treasures hidden here in the wilderness! It would have been but a vain temptation, however, for Baron Sironi was as rich as a Jew, and said to be laying by yearly to add to the already large dowry of his little olive-cheeked heiress.

"Is there no garden?" I asked, as, the next morning, I stood looking out of the window at the abrupt rocky hill which shot up close to the back of the house.

"Oh, yes, a beautiful garden, only a little far off. And the last

time the signor Barone went there he was very nearly being captured by the brigands. He had to run for it. Only think, the signor Barone, fat as he is, having to fly before them! Luckily it was downhill, or else——"

The maiden broke off into a peal of shrill laughter such as only an Italian throat can produce. But *I* didn't laugh. Brigands, good heavens! And if they were to capture my John?

I had little faith in the Salvator Rosa legend, after all I had read in the papers about real, modern banditti. Ears forwarded in envelopes to bereaved relations! Gaetana's words dragged up an endless chain of horrors from the well of memory.

"You don't mean to say there are brigands here, do you?"

"Oh, not just now; that was nearly a month ago. The carabinieri came at once and scoured the country. Of course they didn't catch a single one, but they drove them away, anyhow. They are down in the Chieti district now."

"How on earth do you know?"

"Oh, it's quite simple. Nino—he is the hogherd—has a brother among them; so, you see, of course *he* knows. Besides, for that matter there's not a peasant in the country who is not in league with the brigands, more or less. Some out of fear, others by inclination. Everybody knows that."

"And they aid and abet?"

"Of course they do. What will you? They are poor, the signori are rich, the brigands never molest any but the latter; why then should the former interfere?"

"For the sake of justice."

"Ah, signora, justice is very well in its way. But do you think you would risk the kidnapping of your children and the burning of your home? for such would be the mildest revenge taken upon the informer."

The answer needed reflection, so I prudently refrained, and only said: "And if government offers a reward?"

"Ah, yes, if the reward is big enough, then it generally succeeds. Only the informer takes care to get quickly away to America. But government, you see, is not very active except where taxes are concerned. When it is a question of giving out money"——here she gave a shrug of her brown shoulders peculiar to Italians of the south——"government is as dead as this fly," she added, adroitly catching the unhappy insect.

"What is that cross up on the top of the hill yonder?" I asked, wishing to change the subject and avoid further entomological demonstrations.

"That's the Campo Santo, signora. See, the pathway passes just below your windows."

The information was not cheering.

"The Campo Santo up there on that high rocky point?"

"Si, signora, and to-morrow you will see a funeral. Old Tito died last night—God have him in glory! Not even the viper-broth could save him."

"The *what*?" I cried, hardly trusting my own ears.

"The viper broth. You know what a viper is? Yes? Well boiled into broth they are the finest remedy in the world for weakness."

I shuddered. And well I might. Gaetana's budget was decidedly a disheartening one, and I was not sorry when she left me.

The lady of the house and her daughter had vanished entirely from the scene of our daily life. I didn't see them a dozen times during our whole stay at the Palazzo; and then only by chance. They seemed never to stir out, but to live quietly secluded in their own apartments. The fat Baron was oftener visible, and I never caught a glimpse of him without involuntarily picturing to myself his famous flight before the brigands, and saying to myself that it is wonderful what fear enables us at times to accomplish.

He had invited John to dinner, but they had dined *tête-à-tête*, just like Orientals; upon endless dishes, and no sign of a woman to be discovered. The napkins, however, were Christian, not Moslem satin and gold fringe, and they had forks, massy and magnificent like all the rest of the plate.

I could not get over the brigands; they haunted me night and day; and John never went down to the end of the village even, without leaving me in a state of restless uneasiness.

But let me go back now and tell you about the funeral which, you may remember, was so kindly promised me by Gaetana, and which, in due time, did actually pass right under my bedroom windows.

I was sitting quietly sewing, when, suddenly, I heard a shrill voice from below cry out: "Oh, what joy! what joy! to-day I shall see my Maso!"

A peal of laughter followed, with so strange and unearthly a ring in it that I rose, and, going to the window, looked out.

An elderly woman with wild black eyes, grizzly hair and tattered garments made up of shreds and patches of every quality, size and colour, was passing below in a sort of dancing step, gesticulating wildly with her bare, brown arms, and turning her head from side to side in a state of excitement at once ludicrous and painful to witness. On catching sight of me she stopped short, came up close under the window, smiled, nodded two or three times, and then repeated in a confidential sort of whisper: "Si, signora, I am going to see my Maso to-day. My Maso! My Maso!"

"And where is your Maso, then, my good woman?" I asked, determined to humour her; for, poor creature, it was evident she was not quite in her right mind.

She put her finger to her lips, remained silent a moment, and then pointing up to the Campo Santo on the hill, said softly:

"Yonder, signora. But don't tell them, for they always try to keep me away—ah, here they come!"

At this moment the funeral procession turned the corner of the palazzo. At its head a couple of priests murmuring a chant which was taken up and continued by those following—the same chant which you may hear all over Italy upon a similar occasion.

The monotonous chant floated down from the hillside, now in indistinct murmurs, now swelling into melancholy chorus as the followers took up the response and lengthened the final syllable into a long-sustained wailing note.

Gaetana quite startled me as she laid her hand upon my arm and said:

"You see, signora, I was right. It's old Tito they're carrying off. And look at poor Annetta. See how she is dancing after them!"

"Who is Annetta, and what does she mean by seeing her Maso again?"

"Ah, he was her son, and was killed by the brigands who suspected him of betraying them. She had but him in the world; and when after he had been missing for three whole days, she, the next morning, opening her door, found him stretched dead across the threshold all cut and mangled and with the brigand chief's name written in blood pinned to his breast, her wits left her."

"Poor woman! And she is quite mad?"

"Yes, and no. Mad as a March hare in everything that regards her Maso; sane as I am in all else. She's more sharpness in her little finger than all the rest of the village put together."

"And what is she going to do up there now?"

"Why, every time there's a burial she follows and thinks that he will appear to her. A funeral is a festival for her."

"How dreadful! She looks very poor."

"So she is. That half-roofless house near the end of the village is hers. It's all she has in the world; and, now that her son is gone, she lives entirely on the charity of her neighbours."

Of course, when I repeated all this to John, he at once determined to visit the place, and did so the next day, dragging me up with him very much against my inclination.

A more desolate spot I never saw. An open space of a few yards square upon the summit of the hill, broken masses of rock all around, without a blade of grass or a weed to break their bareness; in the centre a huge black wooden cross, at the foot of which lay the stone slab covering the ghastly receptacle for the dead.

That same afternoon we paid a visit to old Annetta, and found the inside of her dwelling quite in harmony with its exterior. It was desolation itself; but amid all that poverty the mother's heart and love shone forth and hallowed the wretchedness harbouring within the discoloured walls. For Maso's clothes lay ready folded for him

upon a rickety stool, and on the table stood a plate of bread, some dried figs, and a bottle of wine awaiting his "return from the people up yonder," as the poor woman hastened to inform us.

We gave her a little money, for we found that she really was rational enough, save upon the one sad subject, and the next day sent her some linen and a few necessary articles of furniture. Poor creature! Her gratitude was touching, and the more so from the simple manner in which it was expressed. I had good proof of its sincerity later on.

From that day she took to haunting us, as it were; sitting for hours beneath our windows, bringing me sheaves of wild flowers, odd-looking stones and birds' nests to the children, and one day made John a present of a young porcupine she had managed to capture in one of her endless rambles among the mountains.

And all without any interested motive. She never asked for anything, seldom accepted aught without demur, and often left us with an absolute refusal.

John sketched and painted away indefatigably; and I don't at all see why my being his wife should forbid my saying that many of his pictures were wonderfully beautiful. One in particular.

Nothing grand—only a little pool in a rocky water-course, with a weird-like cleft between two mountains through which you catch a glimpse of the distant sea.

The picture is hanging over my writing-table at this present moment; its dark rocks with their rich reddish-brown tints contrasting with the green ferns and velvety moss; the blasted tree mirroring its skeleton branches in the fairy pool beneath; the fantastic cliffs through whose bold portal you catch the soft summer light melting away in the blue distance to slumber upon the motionless waters. How often have I sat upon that low rock there, next the tiny lake, reading aloud or working, while John painted; no visible life around us save the blue-ringed gad-fly floating idly over the cool brown pool, and the eagle poised high over our heads, a solitary speck in the patch of azure framed in by the overhanging heights! It was a pleasant spot, and within half-an-hour's saunter of the palazzo.

II.

I HAD been taken with one of my usual headaches, and had been obliged to seek relief in green tea and obscurity; so that John went alone that day to put the finishing touches to his work.

"Good-bye, Martha," he whispered as he was leaving the room on tiptoe; "try and get a good sleep. I shall be back by three."

Shortly before that hour, feeling considerably better, I rose, dressed and then seated myself at a window to look out for my husband, and catch a first glimpse of his dear honest old face and pleasant cheerful

smile. For, truth to say, I had answered him crossly that morning; it was the heat, or the headache, or both, and I felt remorseful in consequence.

Three, four, half-past; and no John. I began to get fidgety. But catching sight of his watch lying upon a table, I at once felt relieved. For I knew—and this to my cost sometimes—how the dear old fellow used to forget himself, time and everything else, when once fully absorbed in any work that particularly interested him; and, as the sun was yet high, I had no doubt but at that very moment he was sitting upon his usual fragment of rock, putting in a shadow here, working out a detail there, and utterly oblivious, for the moment, of hour, waiting wife, and overdone dinner.

To remorse I had added uneasiness; these two gave place to irritation; till, on the clock striking six, a sudden anguish overcame me, making me start wildly up and hurry off to seek the Baron.

A delay of three hours!

He looked grave, spoke a few words of comfort and encouragement, and then left me to send out his men on the search. I hastily put on hat and scarf and reached the door just as the house-steward was about to start for the spot I had indicated. I would not hear of being left behind, and to the man's evident displeasure, insisted upon accompanying him.

Oh, how slowly he walked! I could have beaten him in my impatient agony. But even that seemingly endless pathway drew to a termination; and when within a few hundred yards of the familiar spot, I rushed forward alone with a cry of "John, John!" upon my parching lips.

Down the last steep, round the last turning. Breathless and terror-stricken I halted. No John was there. Only the voiceless water, now dark and sad, as if mourning the dying sunlight, and the weird tree flinging out its skeleton arms towards me as if in warning or menace.

My heart sank within me, and I turned in mute appeal to my companion who now came panting up. He answered as every puzzled Southern Italian does answer—with a shrug of the shoulders, that implies everything and nothing, as you may please to take it.

"Where can he have gone to?" I groaned.

Signor Pietro gazed slowly round, up at the rocks on either hand, and then, finally, upon the ground beside him.

Stooping, he signed to me to approach. I obeyed, and, to my terror, beheld traces of nailed soles upon the damp soil. They were certainly not my husband's, and there were many of them, of several sizes too; that was all. No trace of violence, no token of confusion. Yet my heart sank still lower as I gazed.

"Who can they be?" I asked in a low tone.

"Brigands," whispered Pietro.

"But they may be peasants," I suggested, trying to catch at a hope that even I myself felt to be vain.

"Peasants!" repeated the man slowly and looking at me with an expression of mingled pity and contempt upon his countenance. "Peasants! Did you ever yet see a peasant here who wore shoes?"

It was too true. I sank upon the stone where I had passed so many happy hours, and burst into an agony of tears. Brigands! Oh, why had I suffered my early uneasiness to be lulled by habit into fatal security? Why? Why? Why? And where was my poor husband now? And I, who had spoken harshly to him, and who——

How I got home I never knew. I only confusedly remember my poor children's frantic grief and the vain attempts at consolation on the part of half the village clustered round the door of the palazzo.

The Baroness led me to her room, and she and her daughter sat down beside me, holding my hands in theirs, while the Baron tried to infuse some little comfort into my tortured heart.

There was a knock at the door, and then a voice from without: "A letter for the Signora Inglese."

I started up with a cry.

"Who brought it?" said the Baron eagerly to the messenger, as I snatched the coarse, ill-folded epistle from his hand.

"It was slipped into Lippo's fingers by a boy whom none of us knew, and who immediately ran off to the woods again."

"Ah, the old story! Send Lippo here directly!"

It was indeed the old story! A letter demanding a ransom of 25,000 scudi—£5,000—on pain of mutilation and death. A delay of three days granted, at the end of which time——

The fearful thing fell from my grasp, and, burying my face in my hands, I rocked to and fro in unspeakable anguish.

Five thousand pounds! Three days! Had I been in England I might have got the money; but here, in the midst of savages and mountains, what could a poor stranger woman do? It would take days to reach Rome even, and I was by no means sure of finding aid when once there.

We had about £100 with us. Should I send that to the place indicated, and deposit it there with a letter begging for a reasonable delay?

The Baron shook his head. The brigands would be in hot haste to be off and away from the scene of their crime and capture. He wondered at their having allowed even three days—twenty-four hours was the general term, and that expired——

There was a knock, and then Lippo entered. A middle-aged peasant, natural quickness and assumed stolidity on every feature. Of course he knew nothing—had never before set eyes upon the boy—wouldn't lend a hand to a brigand to save his own life—was himself an honest man—never meddled with his neighbour's business

—had enough to do to think for his own family. The whole interspersed with unctuous appeals to saints and the Virgin to testify to his veracity.

God forgive me, but, as I looked upon his dark face under the full light of the lamp, I read in its lineaments, if not participation in, at least knowledge of, the foul crime which had robbed me of my dear, noble, single-hearted husband !

I cannot tell you what my feelings were when later, after having put the children to bed, I sat there all alone in my room trying vainly to think out some possible course to pursue, yet unable to arrive at any conclusion ; feeling all the time that each minute as it sped carried away with it a hope of ever seeing my dear, dear husband again. Ah, that was a terrible hour !

It must have been near midnight—the lamp burned dimly, and, one by one, each sound had sunk to rest. I was, oh, so weary in body and soul, and yet so utterly incapable of sleep or consolation. A slight noise suddenly made me start. I raised my head, and, holding my breath, looked around.

All was still as death. It must have been fancy ; it must— But no, it was repeated : a pebble had struck the window from without. At any other moment I might have hesitated, but now I started up, crossed the room, and fearlessly opened it.

"Signora, mia buono signora, sen io," whispered a voice from below ; and, my eyes getting used to the darkness, I dimly made out the figure of a human being close under the wall beneath.

"Who are you ? What is it ?" I asked anxiously.

"Zitta ! Zitta ! Don't speak so loud, they might hear you ! It is I—Annetta ! I have news of the signore——"

I waited to hear no more, but sped down the stairs, out into the gloomy night, and round to the back of the house, in less time than it takes me to write it.

"Where is he ? Where ? Have you seen him ? When ?" I cried hoarsely, seizing the poor woman by the arm with such violence as to make her wince and utter a smothered cry.

"Sì, signora, I saw it all. I was sitting upon the rocks above making a nosegay for you when they came upon him—five of them. I had no time to cry out. And then I was frightened, too, for, you know, it was they who sent my poor Maso up into the dark hole yonder. Oh, do you think I shall see him soon again ? I wish somebody would die to-night, for then—— But I forget—let me tell you about the Signore Inglese. They—the brigands, I mean—spoke for a while and then made him go off with them. Do you think they will send him up there to keep company with Maso ?"

My blood curdled, and it was only by a violent effort that I was able to throw off my imaginary terrors and return to the contemplation of the real ones which, unhappily, surrounded me.

"Where is he? Where is my husband? Where have they taken him to?"

"Yes, yes, I know; for, you see, I followed them. They never saw me, though they did look behind ever so often. Ah, I know the woods as well as they do, and when Maso comes back I'll take him with me to show him their hiding-place. We'll have a life for every wound in his poor body. Ah, that will be a glorious day! Ha! ha! ha!"

She laughed softly, and there was a ring in the low tone that harrowed my soul to hear.

"Annetta, can you find your way back to the place?" I asked in a voice that trembled with repressed excitement and anguish.

She nodded.

"Is it very far from here?"

"No—the other side of that peak. I followed them through the forest like a dog on the track of a wild beast, and when they reached their cavern I crouched down behind a rock to watch them. I saw the woman come out to receive them. She is Fuoco's wife, you know—it is she who disposes of the prisoner's fate. It was she who gave the sign, and then the knives were sheathed in my poor Maso's flesh—the flesh I have so often kissed. He fell, and now—now—now—— But what matter? He will come back—Maso! Maso! Oh, hasten down to thy poor old mother that we may sup together once more, and then go forth to purge the earth of thy murderers! Maso! Maso!"

"Annetta, tell me what I can do—how can I see my husband—save him?"

"I will bring you to him if you have the courage. We will cut his bonds. A sharp knife and a stealthy foot can do it."

"Oh, Annetta!"

"Ah, I know their ways well. It's not the first time I have watched them. They drink and game, they quarrel and fight, and draw their knives, but always end by sleeping like so many hogs. But it requires courage——"

Courage! I would have faced the whole world to save my husband.

"No, not to-night, it's too late. In less than an hour the dawn will whiten the peaks. No, not to-night. But to-morrow—at midnight we can be there. Now let me go. My Maso might return home and not find me, you know. We'll set out as soon as it is dusk. You are not afraid, are you? No? I thought so. There, trust to Annetta; she'll bring you back your husband, and then you'll speak a word to the priests to let my Maso go. You are rich, and priests always heed rich people. But the poor—the poor! Now go back and sleep, and to-morrow night——"

"At dusk——"

"Yes, and mind, not a word to anyone; they are all traitors here. It was they, and not Maso who—— Good-night. Good-night."

She kissed my hand ere I could hinder her, and then, gliding away into the darkness, was lost to sight.

I reached my room, flung myself upon my bed, and, contrary to all expectations, fell into a sound sleep.

How it was, I know not—who can tell what passes during slumber?—but when I awoke I felt a newborn strength and hope within me: a mysterious something whispering that I should save John.

The day passed wearily enough, heaven knows. Baron Sironi kept aloof, fearful, I suppose, that I might ask him to lend me the money; the Baroness seemed to think that broth was an infallible remedy for anguish of mind, for every hour a servant came with her compliments and a basin. I hate broth of any nationality whatever, and Italian broth in particular.

But at last night fell.

"You have told nobody?" whispered Annetta as I reached the place of meeting.

"Not a soul."

"That is well. Now let us start."

I cannot tell you very much of that terrible journey; yet, even now I often repeat it in my dreams, and, with a start of horror, wake up to murmur a prayer of thankfulness.

Down the dark ravines, up the rocky steepes, through bush and briar, till my clothes were in shreds and my hands all bleeding; on through endless woods, now feeling our way in the darkness, now emerging into the uncertain starlight, but ever with stealthy step and listening ear.

The fatigue must have been great, but I did not feel it. I had a dim consciousness of a great danger, but I would not heed it. One great aim carried me through all—the liberation of my husband.

I *would* succeed.

There were bears abroad—they were nothing to me; the gliding rustle of the serpent crossed my path—I stepped on; the shriek of the night bird broke forth above my head—I welcomed it as a cover to our stealthy steps; the wing of the bat more than once brushed my cheek—I never shrank. John was there, and John I would reach, in spite of difficulty and danger.

At last Annetta halted. She put her finger to her lip, and pointed to a rocky height on the other side of the little valley, upon whose brink we were standing.

I understood her meaning. It was there that my generous, noble husband was lying in the power of a set of miscreants, whose thirst for plunder was only equalled by their audacity in seeking it.

Ah, if he could but guess that his wife was so near!

My heart beat wildly. I took a sip of strong coffee from the bottle I had taken care to provide, made Annetta do the same, and then motioned her to go on.

Ever more cautiously the nearer we drew—now dragging ourselves almost on our faces through the scanty herbage, now pressing through the thick bushes with infinite precaution ; gliding among the dark rocks, doubling, writhing, creeping—never looking back, ever gaining ground—ever drawing nearer to the end and aim of our perilous enterprise. A sudden stop.

We heard a step at no great distance ; a human step crashing through bush and brake, stumbling over the scattered stones ; nearer and nearer—ever nearer, till at length we distinguished a hoarse ejaculation followed by a violent curse. Lower and lower we crouched in the deep shadow of the mass of rock under which, by a merciful chance, we found ourselves. My heart almost ceased to beat as the step halted within a few yards of where we lay.

Silently I drew out my revolver. The man—I saw him plainly in relief against the sky—gave a loud long whistle. Good heavens ! he had a dog with him then. I gave up all for lost. Another whistle.

“ Ah, the brute’s off again on a bear track—what a cursed road this is ! ”

I heard each word ; I distinguished the very scrape of the match as he lighted it, and saw every feature of his dark face as the flame glowed red upon it, rising and falling with every breath drawn through the stem of his short clay pipe. How was it to end ?

He passed within five yards of where we lay, and had he looked about him with even ordinary attention must have discovered us. My heart gave a bound as he crashed onwards through the brushwood, and I listened in mute thankfulness as his heavy step died away in the distance.

On once more, and with redoubled precaution. The rebound of a twig, the crunch of a leaf might betray us. But the brigands were no longer uppermost in my mind. It was the dog I now dreaded. He might return at any moment, and then—— Perhaps there were others, too, at the cavern. I could not restrain myself ; I whispered my fears to Annetta. She shook her head in reply and motioned me onwards.

Half an hour later we had gained the parapet of rock facing the grotto, and, dragging ourselves to the edge, looked cautiously over.

The red fire-light flung its glow upon a number of sleeping men irregularly grouped within the shallow cavern ; and there, his arm bound to the ruffian beside him, lay my husband, wide awake, with the glare lighting up his dear, honest features as I had seen it light them up a hundred times at our own snug fireside in dear old England. Oh, would we were but back there once more.

There he was, so near and yet so unutterably distant. My heart yearned and ached as if it would break. Chance, or what you will, made him raise his head slowly and gaze towards where we lay. Did his heart tell him that friends were lurking there ?

Revolver and clasp knife were in my hand. The difficulty was to attract John's attention without alarming that of his keepers. An unguarded movement on his part might ruin all. I could think of no plan, and time pressed. And the dog—he might return at any moment, and then—— I grew sick at heart.

Not one of the brigands moved; I suppose they were all more or less intoxicated. Some were snoring heavily. The one who had overtaken us on our way lay quite close to the entrance; I recognised him at once. He was to be feared, indeed, for he, at least, was not drunk.

A noise in the bushes behind made us cower. The dog! I thought I should have fainted. But no, it was only a hedgehog, or some other animal of the kind, probably in search of prey.

Once more I breathed freely and dared raise my head. John's companion turned slightly over. By the flickering glare I saw that the bond uniting them was but a cord. That was in our favour at any rate, for had it been a chain——

I determined to wait no longer. Of two risks, John's involuntary start and the dog's return, one must be run. I wonder now how I ever had the courage to do it.

Slowly I raised myself from my crouching posture, stretching out one hand with the knife and revolver, while with the other I steadied my trembling frame. My heart was on my lips, my soul in my eyes. At that very instant John's gaze met mine. A rapid raising of the head told me I had been recognised, but the motion, slight as it was, must have disturbed the sleeper next him, for he moved uneasily for a moment and then turned heavily over.

I cowered down once more. When I ventured at last to look up again I met John's eyes fixed in anxious, inquiring gaze. It was as if he had seen a vision. This time I signed to him with the clasp-knife, and, at the same moment Annetta drew me down beside her once more.

Taking the weapon mutely from my hand, she glided to the ground and pointed to her own bare feet. Yes, she was right, she would accomplish the perilous feat better than I could hope to do. And yet—— But she allowed me no time; she crept noiselessly along and disappeared round the end of the rocky barrier.

I did not dare look up, but closed my eyes, and with reeling brain and singing ears, throbbing heart and sickening soul, passed the moment which was to decide the fate of us all, and which dragged itself out to a very century of anguish and suspense.

A light touch on my arm. I started up, John was beside me. We set out, silently at first, cautiously, every step studied, every movement measured. But as the distance behind us increased, and as the sense of freedom grew upon us, our precautions fell away one by one, and our voices resumed their natural tone. Then, at last, as the village rose before us in the faint light of the breaking dawn I flung myself

into John's outstretched arms and broke into a fit of crying, such as, perhaps, you may faintly imagine, but which I am utterly unable to describe. In that moment a foretaste of paradise was mine.

I have little more to tell you. We made a comfortable provision for old Annetta, packed up our trunks, and without an hour's delay set off from a place which I sincerely hope never to set eyes upon again. There was much useless excitement and much official fever in certain quarters ; we had to sign endless declarations, *bersaglieri* and *carabinieri* were sent out by scores, and there it all ended.

It is the way of all things in dear, dirty, incomprehensible Italy, whose loveliness must be seen to be understood, and whose people no amount of study will ever enable you to understand. There, I have done.

From memory John made me a water-colour drawing of the little pool, the blasted tree and the distant slumbering waters. "A remembrance of Roccanera," he said as he presented it to me on my birthday. As if I needed any "remembrance" of a place in which he so innocently suffered himself to fall "Among the Brigands."

A. BERESFORD.



OLD AGE.

FROM SULLY PRUDHOMME.

COME quickly, years ! I long for that blest age
 When through my veins the blood will calmly flow ;
 When pleasures tempt no more—no tempests rage :
 At peace with my old griefs of long ago.

When love from fret and fever loosed at last
 Shall ask no more for answering lips to press ;
 Can wreck a life no more—but from the past
 Can gather still the ancient tenderness.

I long to reach the evening of my days,
 And look on hours from care and conflict free,
 As one may watch from hills the winding ways—
 The rushing rivers and the storm-tossed sea.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

A LEGEND OF KENILWORTH CASTLE.

IT was the evening of the day set for Queen Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth. Great multitudes of people had been for many hours assembled on the walls, in the chase, and park and gardens, to witness the splendid sight. But her Majesty had been detained till twilight at Warwick, to receive the homage of her subjects, and now it was announced that the grand entrance would be made by torchlight.

At length the great bell of the castle tolled, and a single rocket shot up into the air. Then all held their breath and listened. At first they could only hear a dull sea-like sound in the direction of Warwick Castle, but it came nearer and grew louder, till they could distinguish the tramp of horses, music and shouting, and the clang of armour.

When the queen entered the royal chase, hundreds of great rockets were sent blazing and hissing into the sky, and such a mighty shout was set up by the multitude that it was almost a wonder it didn't jostle the stars out of their places. Yet they did not seem at all disturbed by the tumult, but stayed quietly in their orbits, and winked at one another as though making fun of the earl's fireworks. The whole music of the castle burst forth, then there was a round of artillery and a tremendous discharge of blunderbusses.

The procession moved slow and stately from the gate of the park, illuminated by two hundred great wax torches, borne by armed horsemen.

The queen, who was young at that time, and though not handsome, was noble and grand-looking, came mounted on a beautiful milk-white horse, which she managed very finely, for she was an admirable rider. She was dressed in the richest silks, velvet and lace, and from head to foot seemed almost blazing with costly jewels.

Beside the queen rode the Earl of Leicester, on a jet-black steed, one of the handsomest in the world, with trappings of velvet and gold, and silver bits. The earl was gorgeously dressed, and glittered all over with gold and gems. He sat his horse so elegantly, and was so proud in his bearing, that he might have been mistaken for a king, had he not ridden bare-headed like the rest of the courtiers. After the queen and the earl followed a train of noblemen and ladies, guards, pages, knights, gentlemen and soldiers—a long and splendid cavalcade. On either side stood a line of people, closely packed together, all bowing and shouting their loyal welcomes.

As the queen was approaching the outer tower, she checked her horse, to speak to one of her ladies, when suddenly there broke, or

rather slid, through the line of soldiers a little girl, who flung herself at her Majesty's feet, and grasped her robe, crying :

"A boon, great queen, a boon !"

A rude soldier strode forward and lifted his broadsword over the head of the child, when, quick as a flash, a boy scarcely larger than the girl, leaped out of the crowd, and snatched the sword from the soldier's hand, saying boldly :

"Thou art a cowardly knave !"

The man turned upon him in rage, caught back the sword and might have killed him with it, had not the queen cried :

"Hold, villain ! By my faith, I think the lad is right ! Would'st butcher babes like these ? Then art thou one of King Herod's men, and none of ours. Stand back !"

Then turning her eyes on the little girl, who stood trembling at her side, she looked at her a moment in silent surprise. And well she might, for the child was as beautiful as an angel. She could scarcely have been more than ten years of age ; she was very fair and delicate, with a tender, appealing face, and a voice sweet but mournful, like the sound of a wind-harp. She had large dark eyes, with long, heavy lashes, but her eyebrows were a shade lighter, and her hair, which was soft and wavy, was of a rich golden hue. Now tears were flashing in her eyes, her red lips were quivering, her cheek was brightly flushed, her hair gently lifted from her forehead by the evening wind ; and in her simple white frock, she looked there, under the torchlight, so like a radiant little seraph that the stern queen spoke softly to her, almost as though in fear, saying :

"Who art thou, and what would'st thou with me ?"

"My name is Rosamond Vere," answered the child, "and I came to put this petition into your own hands, and to beseech your Majesty to grant the prayer of a poor motherless little girl, who will pray to God for you every night and morning, as long as she lives."

The queen smiled graciously and took the paper, but said :

"This is no time nor place to read petitions, child. Come to the castle to-morrow at the hour of twelve, and we will give thee an audience. But tell me, who is thy brave young champion ? By my soul, he hath a right gallant spirit !"

"I do not know, your Majesty ; I never saw him before," said Rosamond.

The boy of whom they spoke had gone back among the spectators, but on hearing these words he stepped modestly forward. He was a handsome lad, with deep, dark, beaming eyes, and a sort of grand look about his forehead which made him seem, for all his plain peasant dress, nobler than any young lord or duke in all that cavalcade.

The queen smiled on him, and said :

"Well, young rash-head, what art thou called ?"

"William Shakespeare, may it please your Excellent Highness."

"Marry, a good name, and an honest; and thou art a brave lad! Doubtless we shall hear of thee when thou art a man. But now away with ye both, for it is late for such chicks to be abroad."

Then she loosened the reins of her horse and rode forward with Leicester, and all the procession moved on again. They passed through the tower, over the bridge, and entered the castle, with another peal of music and discharge of artillery, and such a terrific irruption of rockets that some of the country-women shrieked with fright, thinking that the castle and all the great folks in it were being blown into atoms, some even fancying that they saw the queen on her white horse riding straight up into the air.

Rosamond Vere went away to Warwick, with some friends, and William Shakespeare went home to Stratford with his father and mother. They drove in a rough little wagon, for in those days only kings and nobles had carriages. William sat on a bag of wool behind his parents. His head was full of the splendours he had seen, and his heart beat high and fast with pride because of the queen's praise. He was greatly excited, but he was tired also, and when they reached home, he was found fast asleep on the wool-bag.

The next day, when little Rosamond presented herself at the castle, she was at once admitted and conducted to an ante-room, where she had a few minutes to wait. She met there an elegant young courtier, one Sir Walter Raleigh, who kindly instructed her how to conduct herself before the queen. Above all things, he told her she must remember never to turn her back on her Majesty, but when she was dismissed, to go out backward. And Rosamond promised to do as he bade her. Just at twelve she was summoned by the lord chamberlain to the great hall, where the queen was holding court. She was seated on a throne under a canopy of state. She wore her crown, and a dress of rich velvet, soft blue, like the sky, covered with white lace, so fine that it looked like light clouds; it was looped up with great diamonds, that shone like stars.

After having been conducted to the foot of the throne, Rosamond knelt there, and looked up timidly into her Majesty's face. Alas! it was clouded with a frown.

"And so," exclaimed the queen, "thou art the daughter of that Walter Vere, who lately conspired with other traitors to set our prisoner Mary of Scotland free! He hath deserved death, and death he shall have!"

"Oh, have mercy, gracious madame," cried Rosamond. "My poor father hath a tender heart, and the Queen of Scots moved it by her tears and her beauty. Oh, she is so beautiful; if your grace would see her, you would have pity on her also."

Queen Elizabeth blushed deeply, for she knew in her heart that she was envious of Mary Stuart's beauty, and she said more sternly than before: "Thy father hath acted traitorously and must abide his sentence. Go, child."

But Rosamond, instead of rising, took from her bosom a small package, and placed it in the queen's hand. It was a paper containing a ring. On the paper was written the name of Walter Vere, and a verse of scripture, signed "Anna R." On the ring was engraved a crest, the arms of the Boleyns.

Queen Elizabeth turned pale as she examined these, and hastily asked—

"Where got you this? And this? Speak, girl!"


"My father," answered Rosamond, "was an officer in the Tower at the time the queen, your mother, was imprisoned there. He was good to her, and, the night before she was beheaded, she gave him these mementoes."

Elizabeth's face softened, and a tear shone for a moment in her cold, grey eye, but did not fall. Then she spoke:

"For *her* memory's sake we grant thy prayer. We forgive thy father, but let him see to it how he again braves our ire."

She then wrote an order for the immediate liberation of Walter Vere, stating that she had granted him a full pardon. This paper she was about to give into the hands of an officer to be conveyed to London, but Rosamond begged that she might carry it herself, and the queen kindly assenting placed her under the charge of the officer, requesting him, with her own lips, to be kind to the child. She extended her beautiful hand to Rosamond, who kissed it fervently, but was too much overcome with joy and thankfulness to speak a word more. She rose up so bewildered, and in such haste to set out on her journey, that she quite forgot Sir Walter Raleigh's injunctions, and, turning her back on the queen, actually ran out of the hall, much to the merriment of the gay court.

The rest of Rosamond's story is soon told. She went to London and freed her father, who never got into any trouble of the kind again. She grew to be a beautiful woman, married a country gentleman, and lived for many years far from the great world, but happy and beloved, because always good and loving.



THE WAYS AND WATERS OF KISSINGEN.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN LOTUS LAND,"
"THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN," ETC., ETC.



DR. DIRUF'S HOUSE.

PERHAPS the pleasantest moment of the day was when we returned from our early morning glasses to our rooms. Somewhat tired out with an hour and a half's walking and strolling, with intervals of drinking the waters and listening to the music, we had earned our rest.

There was the pleasure also of finding letters and papers awaiting us. Like everyone else, we were deeply interested in the Dreyfus Case, which the Alsace-Lorrainers have declared to be the most terrible iniquity of the century: an opinion most right-thinking men will agree with—for where

shall we find a greater? If we go back to the Middle Ages we may find rougher, coarser, more uncivilized evils, as became the times: we shall find nothing more barbarous, nothing more horrible.

Zola's famous *J'accuse* had startled his country. All honour to his courage, which has mainly brought all to light—if, indeed, all is permitted to come to light. In future days he will be remembered no less for this than for his works.

One trembles for the future of France, where such things are possible: a far more dangerous condition than the Reign of Terror. If she does not quickly gather up the fragments of honour that remain to her, and look well to her ways, and set her house in order, she will fall into Anarchy of the very worst kind, and inevitable ruin. The remedy lies in her own hands, even though bloodshed and another Reign of Terror may lead to it.

So the papers were just then specially interesting, whilst letters when one is abroad are always twice welcome.

Our rooms were a haven of rest. We had the floor almost to ourselves, and everything was delightfully quiet. The well-spread breakfast table always greeted us on our arrival: well-spread in the way of white linen and bright silver—not groaning with the good things of life, for anything beyond small rolls and Bismarck bread was not *Kurgemäss*.

Our attentive waiter—as quiet in his movements as one of Miss O'Grady's ghosts, and certainly much more agreeable—never neglected his duty; and once when they sent up cold coffee disguised in a hot coffee pot, he went down into the kitchen and created such a whirlwind and commotion that the Chef was indisposed after it for a whole day, and in future the coffee was served at boiling point. He was quiet and studious, this waiter, employing all his leisure moments—and he had a good many when we first arrived and for some time after—in reading really thoughtful books. English, French and German, all were alike to him and all were welcome. His only recreation was talking to Rosa; and if the truth must be told he found a good many opportunities for indulging in that agreeable pastime.

Rosa on her side evidently admired him, and we had a suspicion that before the end of the season they would exchange rings and plight their troth to each other. All happiness be theirs, if it was so.

Our room was delightfully cool and cheerful, with windows always open, outside blinds adjusted to the exact angle that admitted the light and excluded the sunshine, and the carefully drawn thin lace curtains pleasantly stirred by the gentle breeze.

Down in the shady garden below was a *dépendence* occupied by a somewhat eccentric family. One, an invalid, had all her meals on the balcony, reclining on a long chair. Her movements were gracefully languishing, and she evidently liked to be made much of, and exacted quiet attentions.

Contrary to most Germans, she was always becomingly dressed, in thin robes of muslin or rich silks according to the weather, whilst a mantilla gracefully outlined her head and shoulders and framed-in a very pretty face. A very white hand peeped out, playing with a knife and fork, or delicately raising a glass of champagne to her lips; the fingers sparkling with gems of the first water. From our enviable height it was like looking down upon dumb motions—not a sound was heard.

After our well earned but frugal breakfast had been digested in the rest that followed, the hour came for the bath: the champagne bath, as Miss O'Grady called it, and the description was not a bad one. The water was always sparkling and remained so, but it varied in strength and was much more sparkling some days than others: most sparkling of all at the "mother" establishment: the Salinen:

situated about half an hour's walk outside the town, through pleasant chestnut groves.

Another and still pleasanter way to it was to go up the river in one of the small steamers. This took about ten minutes and was really a lovely river excursion. Lilies spread their leaves and flowers upon the water, and reeds and rushes lined the sides, which whispered and surged as the troubled surface set them nodding and rustling. Overhanging willows contemplated their reflections, and bush after bush of the wild rose scented the air.

In the fields beyond, men and women were at work, cutting down the hay—short, coarse grass which our pampered horses in England



ON THE RIVER.

would not have looked at. Beyond this again rose the hills in unbroken foliage: shady woods, in which people wandered, and lost themselves, and found themselves again.

The river wound pleasantly amidst the landscape, yet never very far from the road leading to the Salinen. After once taking the baths there, it seemed impossible to take them elsewhere, so much stronger and more sparkling, so much more exhilarating was the effect of the water. It was a large building with many rooms, and always seemed full, so popular was this "original establishment." In the centre of the hall was an arrangement covered with a bell-shaped glass by which the water could be seen bubbling furiously up from the well.

At a *guichet* sat the extremely disagreeable woman who took the money and gave you your ticket, and if you had a favourite room made a point of refusing it. It was said that the favour of this presiding "genius of the baths" was only to be propitiated by purchase: exactions no free-born Briton would ever give in to: for whilst one of the pleasantest things possible is to acknowledge services willingly rendered, and not merely rendered for the sake of reward: backsheesh deliberately extorted is a very different matter.

Whatever the reason, we were not popular with the lady of the *guichet*: and it was only towards the end of our stay that we found we could claim certain rooms by paying an extra fee; a discovery which made us independent of frowns or favours.

Close by the bath-house was a large restaurant, where people could dine quietly in the open air, in the verandahs or under the trees. It was not largely patronised, and this made it all the pleasanter. After the bath almost everyone flocked back to Kissingen, for the sake of the exercise. The few who could not walk so far took the steamer.

Thus between one and three, the Salinen enjoyed a great deal of repose, and it was good to remain there occasionally, and feel a little out of the world. They served you well, too, and had an excellent cook, whilst the young women who waited upon you were the exact opposite of the *dame du guichet*. Always smiling and amiable they thought nothing a trouble.

After three o'clock the crowd began to re-assemble; people walked out to take coffee. There were many tables, and by four o'clock almost every table was occupied.

All down the walk was an enormous sort of open wooden shed, about a hundred and fifty yards long, packed and piled with what looked like bundles of faggots or brushwood from the shelving roof to about ten feet from the ground; at which height a narrow platform reached by steep steps ran round the whole structure. Through the brushwood the Saline water percolated, and patients walked round and round the platform and inhaled the vapour—which of course was good for every ill under the sun, including sleeplessness.

Here one day we met her Excellency, who had not only walked out from Kissingen but was actually going to walk in again.

"I don't sleep well," she said, "and they told me that if I came and sat here for half an hour, it would cure my insomnia."

In vain we urged that the two walks would be too much: she should return by steamer. Like all true daughters of Eve, her Excellency was not to be convinced.

"I am a good walker," she replied, "though a slow one. If I take my time and rest on the benches, it will not tire me."

"Well," we said, when we met the next morning at the wells, and drank our water and walked up and down the outer avenue, and

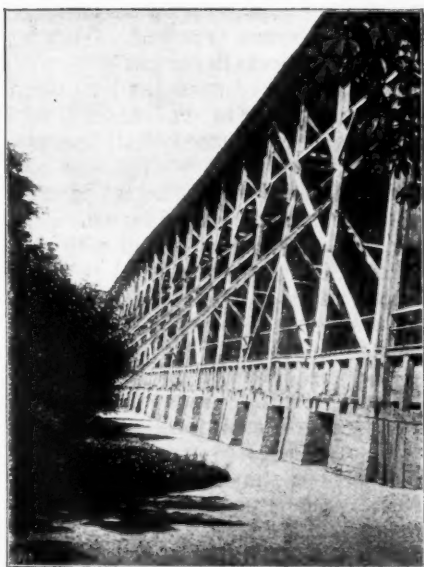
admired the flowers together: "how did your two walks yesterday agree with you?"

She was looking pale and tired and smiled a little reproachfully.

"You can see," she returned; "and your eyes are saying 'I told you so,' though your lips may be silent. Yes, you were quite right. It was too much for me. I am weaker than I thought for, and forget that I am old."

"And how did you sleep?"

"Worse than ever; that is, not at all. I was overtired, and heard all the hours strike, and watched the darkness creep away before the dawn. It is rest all the same, no doubt; rest to the nerves and



AT THE SALINEN.

body; but it is wearisome. Those night vigils seem to me so like death—I don't know why. Death seems so near; and the whole mind is filled with the consciousness of the great change that awaits us all. It is the utter silence and darkness of everything, I suppose."

Princess Marie, tall and stately-looking, was buying flowers, and we were glad to see that she, too, patronised our pathetic woman. But even Princess Marie could not extract more than a monosyllable from her lips. Beside her was the beautiful dog, her almost constant companion, who seemed quite conscious of his privilege.

"That dog has almost a human expression," remarked her Excellency. "He looks up into the face of the Princess as if he

perfectly understood who she is and what she says to him. Did you ever see a dog with such a grave, dignified demeanour? You might call him an aristocratic dog. It really is remarkable, and almost makes one smile."

"The dog's lines have fallen in pleasant places," we returned, "and if anything, he is too conscious of the fact. That flower-woman the Princess is patronising, has she not a pathetic expression?"

"She is the only one of the women who interests me," replied her Excellency; "and yet I can get nothing out of her. Like the animals, she almost seems to appeal to you through her eyes."

"She looks to the last degree sensitive and impressionable," we said. "We want to know if she is married and has a good husband; whether he is a tyrant bringing her to an untimely end, or treats her kindly and allows her nature to expand. That woman essentially needs the sunshine of happiness in her life."

"I will find out for you," returned her Excellency. "What you say interests me more than ever in her. She will never open to your questionings, for she seems frightened of all the men. I will try to be more successful."

At that moment another of the "patients" passed us, in whom we were also interested, for some undefined reason. A little woman, also dressed in black, like the Apparition, but with no other point of resemblance. Her head was always clothed in a rusty black bonnet, beneath which shone a mass of dead-gold hair that seemed the burden of her life.

For some time we could not discover who she was. From her somewhat large face, large pale blue eyes looked out upon the world. Their expression was curious. They seemed in a quiet way to observe everything; to be for ever occupied with the problems of existence, and to be searching for a reason for so much that is inexplicable. The power of analysis was strongly here; the organ of causality was prominent. There was a metaphysical look about the face—if the faculty can be expressed by a look.

All this silent power of observation was not there for no purpose; we felt sure this little, silent, pale woman, with the large pale blue eyes, was a writer, and we found that we had not been mistaken. She was a well-known author, daughter of a celebrated professor. Her talent lay in fiction rather than metaphysics; but it was quite possible that she had turned her attention to fiction because it is in greater demand and yields a better harvest. Heart and brain may have been in the abstruse sciences, but these bring very little grist to the mill; and mortals cannot live upon air.

Our interesting *Fräulein* did not appear to be over-weighted with the good things of life. Her dress was invariably a rusty black, like her bonnet, unrelieved by any colour, excepting on the rare occasions when she carried a rose or two in her hand, probably the gift of some literary admirer. Her dead-gold hair, as we have said, seemed the

burden of her life. On what should have been a beauty and adornment she evidently bestowed no pains. There was an immense mass of it that many a woman would have given a treasure to possess; but *Fräulein* had a mind above outward appearance, the wearing of apparel and plaiting of hair. It hung half way down her back, sometimes over the right shoulder, sometimes over the left; and over the forehead its waves were always a little more down on one side than on the other.

In her case it gave her a somewhat helpless, appealing expression. She was so small, and somehow impressed upon one the fact that life was a martyrdom. Authoresses are said to be proverbially untidy, but our own experience both at home and abroad has not borne out the proverb. *Fräulein* seemed incapable of mastering that hair which was out of all proportion to her small stature.

She, also, more often than not, was alone, and quietness and silence seemed to envelop her as an atmosphere. Dr. Diruf was her doctor, and she evidently thought he had no equal, both socially and professionally. We ourselves much doubt if he has many superiors. His whole heart was in good works.

Now in common with some other doctors of the place, it was Dr. Diruf's custom to meet many of his patients in the *Kurgarten* every morning between seven and eight: and many a time he would be there soon after six. The distinct personality: the beautiful, sympathetic face with its benign expression; the long hair, which made him look rather as if he had stepped out of an old picture: was a marked feature in the assembly: and when, on rare occasions, he was absent, one had an uncomfortable feeling of something having gone wrong. Something was wanting in the *Kurgarten*; what was it? Then the absence of the doctor would be remarked, and the mystery was explained.

He would take up his position in the outer avenue, not far from the wells, but away from the ever-constant stream of water drinkers, who crowded about the attendants and round the hot water apparatus. Here Dr. Diruf held his court.

His patients would loiter about, and as each was dismissed or dismissed himself, another took his place. But the patient was quite as often a lady as of the opposite sex; and then the doctor's bow would be deeper, his manner more gallant and impressive, the interview distinctly prolonged.

Amongst his patients was our literary *Fräulein*, and her interview never failed. She seemed to live for this, as though it were her one and only reason for visiting the gardens. She drank the waters, of course, but they came in as a mere accessory. Yet disappointment was often her lot; the stars were frequently against her; she had continually to exercise that greatest of virtues, patience.

Her custom was to take her seat on the bench nearest the doctor's audience chamber; a small, pathetic figure in black; an image of resignation; her golden hair gleaming in the sunshine; her pale blue eyes fixed on the audience chamber.

A patient would bow himself away; Fräulein would rise hastily and make a dart for the chamber—the open air throne room. But before she could reach it, a patient more wary, more wily, more actively disposed, would arrive before her, and her chance was lost.

They were as eager in this matter as in taking their glasses of water; everyone for himself; *sauve qui peut*; it is the German temperament; wise in their generation; and so they are getting on and making way; they are flourishing and will flourish, like a green bay-tree. People always attain their ends if they have patience and know how to wait, both as individuals and as nations.

So poor Fräulein often lost her legitimate right as another stepped in before her; and she would return to her bench after describing a circle of fifty yards round the throne room.

After the fourth fruitless attempt a certain drooping, hopeless attitude would take possession of her, as though the stars were in conjunction against her, and it was useless striving against fate. Now and then a slight upright frown would appear on the usually smooth forehead, and who could wonder: but it was more a frown at her untoward destiny than the unkindness of her fellow mortals.

Once, at the sixth unsuccessful attempt, she did what she had never done before: she gave it up and went away, more disconsolate-looking than Niobe at her worst. She had taken her third glass; the hour hand was approaching eight o'clock; a sudden feeling—it was evident from her expression—of the futility of all human hopes and aims took possession of her, and she yielded to it.

This was quite against her nature, which was full of a quiet determination; a holding on to fixed purposes; but there are moments when we relax our strugglings against adverse influences; all our arrows have been shot, and everyone has missed its mark; the bow is unstrung. But it is only a temporary lull; only to gain fresh strength and gather in the arrows, and the battle begins again. Once more we string the bow and let fly the arrows, and some of them again miss the mark, and some of them reach home.

So, on that occasion, after the sixth attempt, Fräulein felt her bow suddenly relax, and she went straight away, never turning her head or looking backwards.

We watched her cross the avenues transversely, never paying the slightest attention to the orchestra that for once was charming us with Weber's enchanting "*Softly sighs*"—Fräulein was softly sighing to herself without doubt, but there are sighs of sadness as well as sentiment—and stopping at a flower stall, she bought herself a rose by way of consolation, after calling for her Bismarck bread. We were glad to see that she too patronized our pathetic woman, whose name we had now learned was nothing more romantic than Katrine Schmidt; and the little drooping figure, with its quiet step of determination, still never turning her head or looking back, crossed

the road, blush-rose in hand, and going down through the bazaars, disappeared up a street that led to her home.

There, no doubt, breakfast awaited her; and when the warm coffee had been taken and the Bismarck bread digested, life would appear under a new aspect. More to-morrows would dawn, and fate would not be always against her: and in short, hope—eternal in the human breast—would tell again its flattering tale.

It was interesting to watch the doctor's open-air interviews with his patients. The bows that were quite in keeping with a throne room: the intense earnestness with which a patient would describe a slight finger ache which must mean gout or rheumatism; the night's rest



IN THE KURGARTEN.

broken by waking half an hour sooner than usual; the lady suffering from *embonpoint*, who in spite of the usual amount of exercise, religiously abstaining from butter and all farinaceous food, had only diminished six ounces in seven days—not even an ounce a day; the weak member of the opposite sex, who had transgressed and taken too much beer and day after day dishes that were not *Kurgemäss*: all this was set forth with an earnestness of tone, a gesticulation of hands, heads and shoulders worthy of the most serious Council of War.

In vain the doctor represented that the waters would not perform miracles; that cause and effect had ruled the world since the days of creation; and that disaster must follow neglected prescriptions.

For the most part they were obeyed to the letter ; but there were a few weak ones—one saw it in their faces—who would never renounce their beer and favourite dishes in spite of the most solemn warnings. We, for instance, indulged in butter, whenever we could circumvent E. by bribery, or by taking advantage of eyes fixed upon an unusually interesting letter : and in like manner other weak people went on with their unlimited supplies of beer and indigestible dishes.

For our own indiscretion Miss Sutherland was partly answerable—it is only fitting that Adam should transfer the burden of transgression to the shoulders of Eve.

"In my first years here," said Miss Sutherland, "I religiously abstained from butter ; it was a penance, for breakfast without butter is like a woman without poetry"—we think that was her simile, but are not absolutely certain—"but this time I have taken butter all along, and am not a bit the worse for it."

This was high authority, and we felt at liberty to follow it whenever the occasion offered. But Miss Sutherland had the advantage over us ; she was absolutely her own mistress, and had no stern guardian to keep watch and ward over her with well-intentioned but relentless purpose. Had absence of butter been the only drawback in the hotel menu, one might have put up with it, but as it was forbidden as not *Kurgemäss* it was liberally provided.

Following Miss Sutherland's example, and the example of the majority of people on the continent, we began by dining at table d'hôte : à Rome comme à Rome. This according to the universal German rule was at half-past twelve : an hour which rather spoils the rest of one's day.

At the beginning of our stay—the first few days—when as yet it was not crowded, both room and dinner were tolerable. Then came a sudden rush of visitors ; the room filled, the menu grew more and more deplorable, and the noise became Pandemonium. We can give it no other name, and often left before dinner was over with head aching and senses bewildered.

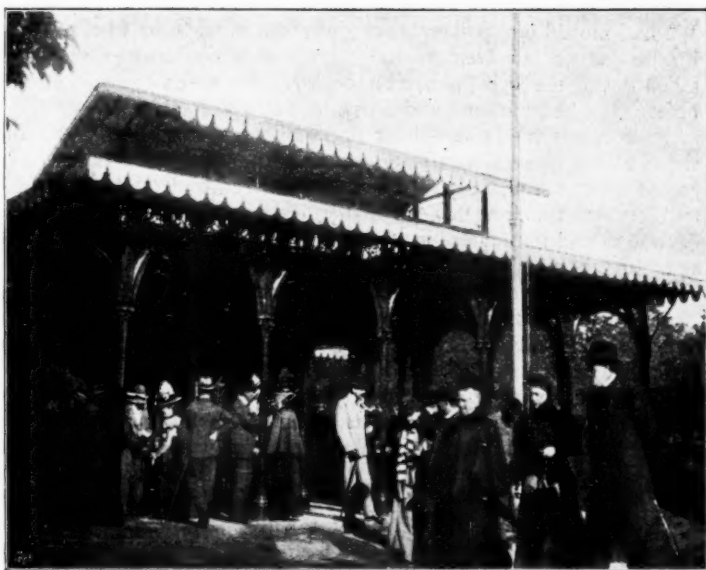
For this of course the hotel was not responsible : they could not help the riotous hilarity of their guests. But to those who loved quietness it soon grew intolerable. We first learned to dread it as a nightmare, then fled from it : not however until we had gone through painful experiences.

As it happened, there were very few English in the hotel this season, and fewer than usual in any other hotel. Perhaps they had learned that the hotels were "splendid misery," and had gone to other pastures—and waters—where they could enjoy moderate comfort. One lady, staying at one of the other hotels, almost wept to E. in describing her sufferings.

"We lament the day that brought us here," she wailed. "I and my husband are absolutely starved, and yet the charges are enormous. They seem to think that we ought to live upon the waters and that

wretched Bismarck bread, and that everything else is a mere superfluous luxury. I assure you that we positively lie awake at night from sheer hunger. How are we to gain any good from the treatment? We want building up, not lowering. We shall both go back like ghosts," she laughed, "ashamed to put in an appearance at home. And for this we have sacrificed the Season; dinners, balls, opera, and no end of gaiety. I really think we shall not remain."

She was a pale, good-looking woman, with the smallest *souffron* of the American about her. Evidently her heart was in fashion and frivolity; harmless frivolity, no doubt, unless it becomes the sole aim and end of life; and when to the loss of the London season was



AT THE WELLS.

added the pangs of hunger, the burden became too heavy for the shoulders. In less than a week from their first appearance they were seen no more, and we concluded they had carried out their threat and departed to other green fields: or perhaps had gone back to take up the broken threads of the London season.

We hardly wondered. It required a little of the stoic to put up with the existing state of things in Kissingen, and stoics and philosophers amongst men and women are not the rule but the exception. The dinners suited the Germans well enough; quantity was not wanting at the *Hôtel de Russie*, and the German appetite is not fastidious; so that the cuisine is liberal it need not be refined.

What is in fact coarse and uneatable to an ordinary Englishman, is a "savoury mess" to the German.

And in helping themselves they have none of the limitations an Englishman will observe. They literally pile up the agony upon their plates—for it was agony to watch them. Nearly opposite to us sat a German Herr with his gnädige Frau. Miss Sutherland and Miss O'Grady had been gone some time: Captain O. had taken his last mud-bath, and he too had left for the happy shores of Old England. "Those mud-baths are a positive luxury," he said to us, "and I am quite sorry to have taken my last, but it is some compensation to get back to one's own home and civilised 'faring.'"

Of the English there were left Miss W. and her sister, and ourselves. We had moved our places lower down the room to be next to them, but as far as our German neighbours were concerned had simply fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire. However, the whole room before long became loud and noisy, and all places alike.

Four American ladies—later importations—contributed their full share to the general confusion of tongues. They had been given rooms on our floor, which we had long ceased to have to ourselves, and our quiet waiter had to snatch his moments for the study of languages and improvement of the mind, or defer it to past ten o'clock at night, when his duties were fairly over but he was not at liberty to go to bed. More often than not, nature had her revenge, and we found him nodding over a 'History of the French Revolution' in English, or some work in French that we should have thought equally above his ambition, but reflecting credit on his perseverance.

These American ladies were very amusing, though quite unaware of the fact. They gave themselves airs in a small way; walked with very stiff backs, heads well in the air, and eyes straight out. To call them proud would be absurd—they were walking monuments of petrified egotism. If we met in the passages they swept past as though we had been so many heaps of dust and ashes, in which the Miss W.'s were included: and if E. met them on the staircase they made not the slightest way, but with the same stiff back and straight gaze offered to walk through her as though she had been one of Miss O'Grady's invisible ghosts. E., however, was unfortunately a little more substantial than a ghost, and "mindful of her rights," stood upon the order of her going; and the stiff back and the straight gaze with a great deal of proud bridling, and a consciousness that "two solid bodies cannot come into collision with each other without disaster," had to move to their own side.

This made it the more remarkable that at dinner they should condescend to contribute their full share to the prevalent pandemonium: but apparently the noisy Germans were more to their taste than the quiet English. We understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare within us: measure for measure.

To return to the German opposite and his gnädige Frau, neglected

during this digression. But their time has not been lost ; they have stored liberal supplies. They were a comfortable-looking couple ; that is certain ; and though both had long passed their "first youth," showed no signs of withering. Plump as a partridge would exactly describe their condition : no crow's feet about the eyes, no lines in the face, no fallen muscles. So well did they look that we wondered what they had come to Kissingen for ; since few dream of going there merely for pleasure or pastime. It was evidently not to get up an appetite, and they took no pains to reduce one.

A dish of asparagus sufficient for a dozen people would come in, and over and over again the Herr emptied half on to his Frau's plate



THE FLOWER STALLS.

and the other half on to his own. The lady from the first never blushed, or looked conscious ; women, when all is said and done, have more sang-froid than men ; he had the grace, once or twice to change colour and look uncomfortably warm, but that mild bashfulness very soon wore off. It was the same with other dishes to which they were partial. One needs to apologise for entering into these "vulgar details," but in no other way is it possible to show up the miseries of the table d'hôte, and the mild but distinct martyrdom we endured for a time.

More discrimination ought to have been shown in placing the guests. The English should have been placed apart, a little colony

to themselves ; then the room would have been just bearable ; pandemonium might have been put up with ; but no judgment whatever was exercised.

Exactly in front of us was a man who filled his plate, cut up his supplies, put down his knife (fortunately the knife) and used his fork as one uses a spade ; "literally digging his grave with his teeth" some one remarked : but that was a slight exaggeration : we could not see that the teeth had anything to do with the matter. Such portions as he did not approve of quietly found their way to the floor (again we apologise). Between the courses he was in the habit of leaning his head upon the shoulder of his next door neighbour, mistaking it for a sofa cushion.

It was soon reported that he was not quite in his right mind, and this was true.

His room was at the very end of the corridor, and he would stand there making strange sounds and staring at everyone who passed down the passage in the most uncomfortable manner. Whether he had fallen in love with the American ladies, and this was his eccentric way of paying them silent homage—after the manner of Mrs. Nickleby's devoted admirer—or whether he had taken offence at their stiff backs and straight gazes and was determined to frighten them into unbending, it was difficult to say ; but frighten people he did ; and one day Rosa came to E. in tears and declared that unless he was chained and muzzled, she knew he would attempt somebody's life. It might be hers or it might be the waiter's (here her voice slightly trembled) or it might be one of the visitors : but she had a presentiment that something would happen. He would stare down the well of the lift, she added, and shake the trellis work until she thought it would come to pieces, and she was certain that he meditated either throwing himself down, or throwing someone else down. If it was himself, why, *bon débarras* ; but if it was somebody else—Karl Ludwig, the waiter, for instance—that would be quite another matter. Rosa had much more to say to the same purpose that need not be set down here.

This was the man who was placed opposite to us at table d'hôte ; and his next door neighbour was not so very much better than he.

We bore it for a certain number of days ; and then one day when E. left the room quite ill and pale and almost in tears, it had to come to an end.

On venturing to remark to the landlord upon the largeness of the German appetite, he replied that in that respect the English were equally voracious : after which we observed a discreet silence on all points and limited our communications to polite bows.

So once and for ever we took our leave of a German table d'hôte. We were unwilling to do so because it seemed like abandoning Miss W. and depriving her of the gentle support of our presence, but she had made her arrangements and decided to go on with her martyrdom.

Henceforth we took our luncheon in the restaurant, at 12 o'clock not to interfere with the 12.30 table d'hôte in the next room. We had the room to ourselves, choosing such few and wholesome dishes as were strictly *Kurgemäss*—and were much happier in consequence. In less than a week E. visibly improved; her weight went up most satisfactorily, and she threatened to change from the arum lily into the blush rose. Dr. Diruf was delighted, and declared she was one of his best patients. All went merry as a marriage bell.

But whether she realised the true state of the case and the moving principle that had brought about this harmonious state of affairs is doubtful, for she one morning observed half sadly, have severely: "It is because I do the right thing and never take butter." *Et tu, Brute* will live as long as the memory of Cæsar and Shakespeare: that is to say, as long as the world lasts. As for us, we felt conscious and convicted, and under the reproof our eyes sought the ground.

We were now, comparatively speaking, in paradise, and everything about Kissingen appeared under a new and improved aspect.

We sat at a quiet open window where the elm trees waved and rustled, and the blue sky shone above them, with only each other for vis-à-vis. The miseries we had gone through gradually fell away as a bad dream or a nightmare. Our luncheon hour was as quiet as any other of the twenty-four; and our amiable, but very ugly waiter (not our sitting-room waiter) seemed determined that peace should reign at any price. If another waiter appeared upon the scene with too sharp an entrance or too loud a step, he was down upon him like a hawk upon a sparrow, and the unlucky offender, no matter what he wanted, was sent empty away, back to the table-d'hôte room: divided from it by folding doors, which were always religiously closed. Our refuge was kept as sacred from intrusion by our careful waiter as a choir of nuns at mass, and it was quite a source of amusement to us, the way he guarded the doors as a cat watches a mouse; but we thoroughly appreciated his unremitting attentions.

At 12.30 the gong would sound, and the stream would begin to flow down the narrow passage leading to the dining-room; a trampling of feet, a scraping of chairs; then gradually a sea of voices uprose; waves of sound grew loud and boisterous, lashing themselves to agitation. It might have been anger, quarrels long and fierce, such as end in duels and bloodshed; but it was only the usual riotous hilarity: and we would look at each other with a silent thanksgiving for having found a quiet haven of rest. After we left it only grew worse, we were told, and yet we had thought there could be no deeper depths of misery than those we had gone through.

The next change we made was equally necessary.

They rang the supper changes on Irish stew—of all things in the world—and one or two other indigestible dishes, equally not *Kurgemäss*. The Irish stew was such as would not be tolerated in any

servants' hall in England: but that is not saying much, seeing that the servants' hall is becoming more exacting than the dining-room. To escape this, we took to having our suppers every night at the Casino.

This casino was the chief restaurant in Kissingen, and was very well managed. The proprietor had held a post in the English Navy, superior to that of steward, and had been in close attendance upon a very exalted personage. He knew how to do things, and was very quiet and gentlemanlike in manner. His head waiter also took us under his wing, and was equally satisfactory. He had been valet to a Russian prince, but told us he would have no more of Russian princes if they paid him for his services with his weight in gold.

Here every night we came for supper. We sat on the terrace in the open air, with the waving trees about us and the blue evening sky above. It was never crowded; always quiet; for the casino was considered the most expensive place in Kissingen, though really not so, and the great majority of Germans would not unloose their purse strings in its favour.

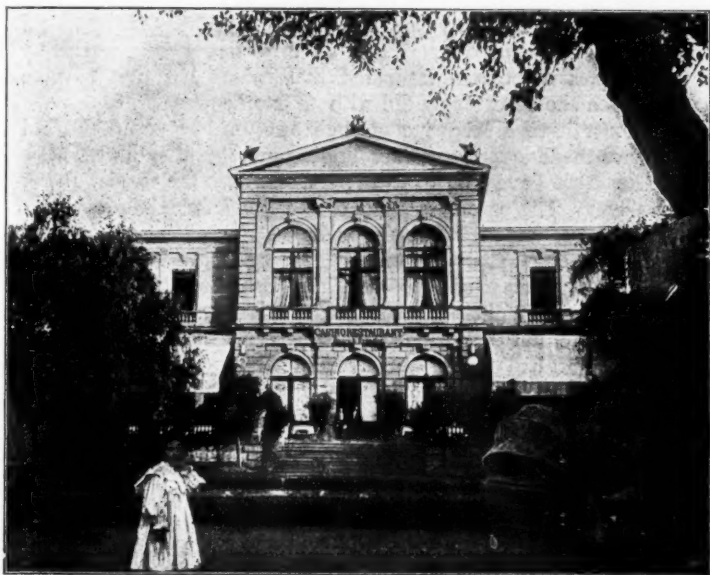
Most of those who did come went indoors. There is nothing a German dreads more than fresh air, whilst a draught agitates them to the point of distraction. If it happened to rain, the awning was drawn and still we were sheltered. The Germans thought us insane; it was tempting fate and rheumatic fever, leading to death, or at best a damaged heart. But we kept on our course. Even the drip drip from the trees was pleasant and refreshing—anything to escape from the close confinement of four walls.

But—il faut payer pour ses plaisirs, as the French say—and surely that pleasure-loving people ought to know. Our suppers at the casino immediately doubled our expenses: only in our case it was not a pleasure but a necessity. We chose only the simplest and most wholesome dishes, and wines the reverse of costly. The wine card every night opened of its own accord at "Heidseck Dry Monopole 1884," until we thought the thing was absolutely animated. It was tantalising, but we would not yield, and always turned to the Beaunes, the modest Châteaux, or the Rhine wines. In every place it is well to drink the wine of the country. Nature knows what she is about, and if man will only do justice to her, the result is satisfactory.

The casino was placed in the park, just across the bridge and amongst the trees. A large reading-room was attached to it, where for a small subscription, one could read the chief papers of every nation. Somehow, it was little known and patronised; whilst the far less pleasant and smaller reading-room at the other end of the Kursaal was always full to overflowing. The secret no doubt was that the one was free, one had to subscribe to the other—and the Germans are nothing if not frugal. They are wise people who spare at the sack's mouth. Hitherto they have not had very much to spare,

but they are now waxing rich, and by-and-by will astonish the world. Even the German waiters in England—whose name is Legion upon Legion—are beginning to dictate terms and assert their independence. It would be well to send them back to their own country in a body for a period of five years, there to learn wisdom and discretion—and humility.

Our evening suppers at the Casino were exceedingly pleasant. The birds would come up to us and ask for crumbs, almost taking them out of our hands. It was wonderful how tame they were in the whole neighbourhood of Kissingen. One bird especially, at the Casino, made great friends with us. If we threw her an extra large



THE CASINO.

piece of bread she would immediately fly off with it, by which we concluded she was the mother of a family and had the cares of a household upon her frail shoulders. Sure enough one day she came very close to us, looked at us searchingly with her bright black eyes, put her head on one side, was evidently revolving a problem, and finally flew away. Two minutes afterwards she returned with two lovely children that could just fly, brought them up to us, introduced them with a chirp-chirp as plainly as if she had spoken, and then with another chirp-chirp said: "You see my confidence in you; I bring you my most precious treasures; I place our lives in your hands; now feed us." It was quite the prettiest thing we had

ever seen in the bird world, without exception, and we felt both touched and flattered.

Then the ceremony began, and as we threw bread, the bird-mother placed it in the open beaks of her young ones, turn and turn about in strict fairness. They on their part did not scruple to take all that was given them without demur. There was no suggestion that they would wait until the old mother had satisfied her own hunger. It was evidently with them as too often in the human world: "The parents are here to minister to our necessities," they argued, "and must be grateful that we allow them the privilege. It is really very good of us to do so."

It certainly was a very pretty and pathetic sight. And when the young ones had been duly satisfied, the mother hopped up to us, gave us a chirp of thanks, and they all three flew away. Presently she came back alone and intimated that it was her turn to take supper, which she accordingly did with an excellent appetite.

Birds must have a language of their own, or how could the old mother have made her young ones understand that they must follow her? She must have said to them: "Come with me to giant-land. Have no fear. The ogre is a good creature and evidently loves us. He will feed us, and if I am not mistaken will rejoice at our well-placed confidence." Something of this sort must have been distinctly spoken, for the young ones flew down into giant-land—evidently their first appearance in public—without any sign of fear.

Not only here, but everywhere else, as we have said, the birds were equally tame, and had we been alone would soon have eaten out of our hands. But at the critical moment a chair would scrape, or someone would pass, or a bough would sway, and the chance was gone.

It might be supposed that life at Kissingen would grow monotonous, but this was not the case. Although the "daily round" of duties never varied, time passed both quickly and pleasantly. There were always fresh people to observe; always a certain number of "curiosities" to study, and keep alive one's sense of humour. Some of the visitors indeed created only astonishment: such as one lady who persisted in walking about in broad daylight with a dress so *décolleté* that she seemed to have mistaken the Kurgarten for a ball room. When susceptible ladies passed her, they shivered and drew closer their mantles and furs—if it happened to be a fur day.

There was of course the usual amount of flirtation, open and concealed.

Our gallant flower-buyer was unremitting in his attentions. Day after day he went about with hands and arms full, until at the end of his time he must have spent upon flowers alone the year's income of an ordinary German baron. He was himself half Polish, yet pale and fair and much more German-looking than anything else. Every day discovered him in a new suit of clothes fitting to perfection, and he certainly showed taste in choosing from the "rose-bud garden of

girls," for either he was acquainted with or managed to be introduced to the prettiest girls in the place. Sweets to the sweet; they were worthy of the flowers they carried.

Finally we discovered that to one special divinity he was positively engaged; the marriage was to take place as soon as ever the Kissingen sojourn came to an end. She was the daughter of an illustrious German *Fürst*, or Prince; and the wedding was to be celebrated in Berlin with great splendour. There was a rumour that the German Emperor would give her away, but this was a mistake; Rumour had exaggerated, as she does so often. The Emperor, however, was to



AT THE SALINEN.

grace the ceremony with his presence: that is to say if he had not started on his Progress through the Holy Land.

Queen Elizabeth was fond of Progresses, and did them right well, after the fashion of her royal father; nothing was too splendid for the occasion. The despotic monarch knew the effect of pomp and pageantry upon the human mind: for if there was one thing Elizabeth understood better than another it was human nature. Why then should there not be pomp and pageantry and gorgeous Progresses in the nineteenth century as well as in the good old days of cake and ale?

We never heard whether the German Emperor did grace the ceremony.

She was a very pretty girl; tall and slender and frail-looking, with large dark eyes and a delicate flush that might need care and attention in the future: that future that almost seems to promise immunity from pain and disease, so clever are we becoming in finding out the antidote for every ill. Is Nordrach and its system destined to revolutionize the world of suffering, and render needless our hospitals for consumption by stamping out the evil? It would seem so. And then we shall cry: "Oh, the pity of it!" The lives that might have been saved had we only known. But the earth, like the sea, will not give back its dead. If anyone wishes to be cured of consumption, they have only to go to Nordrach; such, if we are to believe accounts, is the indisputable fact. It seems that we are yet in the infancy of the world of science, and only now are beginning to awaken to all the splendid possibilities of the future. Who would not wish to have been born a century later, to be able to see what is then going on upon the earth? The North Pole a summer resort; the South Pole a popular colony; the Philosopher's Stone in possession of all, and the Elixir of life a daily beverage.

Our German-Polish Count—to return to Kissingen and the present day—did not patronize our pathetic flower-woman, and we were sorry. He would have been a source of income to her, and she might have laid up in store for the whole year to come. We wondered whether it would have reduced that look of appealing pathos, and put her silence to flight. Probably not; it was all a part of her character; the leopard does not change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin. The ass it is true put on the lion's mane, but he remained an ass all the same, and was soon found out. With the first bray it was all over with him.

The Graf would not patronize our pathetic woman, and we felt aggrieved.

"It is of no use," said her Excellency; "I have tried to interest him in her favour, but he is not to be moved. He declares her face haunts him, with those wide-open eyes and that eternal silence. He likes people to chatter, yet is himself the most silent of men."

"That accounts for it," we returned. "Opposites always agree. It is a wise provision of nature. If all the chatterers married together, and all the silent ones, what a strange world it would be."

Her Excellency opened her eyes and laughed. "I am trying to imagine it," she said, "but cannot do so."

"And you," we continued; "have you succeeded in loosening the strings of her tongue? You promised to make the attempt."

"I have partly succeeded," returned her Excellency, "and I had to drag it from her almost as one drags a confession from the wretch on the rack. But she improved as she went on."

"Well?"

"Well, it is quite a commonplace history, without incident or romance. She has a husband and several young children. He is a

carpenter, but delicate; works when he can, but cannot work always. He is good to her; that I ascertained. In fact if there is any romance in the matter it lies in the fact that they are devoted to each other. And therein lies, probably, part of the secret of that pathetic expression. She lives, as it were, with the sword of Damocles hanging over her head—though she doubtless never heard of Damocles and his tyrant, or his sword either. Her constant fear is that his delicacy will take a turn for the worse and he may die of consumption. And it is quite possible; that is not an exceptional experience in life. I would not say that her fears are imaginary. Then they are very poor too—another reason for that pathetic look. When the husband can't work, she has to earn the bread: and the flower season does not go on all the year round, you know. It is not always May."

"And the roses do not always bloom," we added. "But is this history so very commonplace? Has it not its element of romance? The delicacy of the husband, the uncertainty of life; the devotion of the pair to each other. It is a sort of pastoral idyll."

"Including the struggle to make both ends meet," laughed her Excellency. "I fear your idyll is set in a minor key, and has much more prose than poetry in it. What this poor woman is going through is very much the common lot of those in her station of life, setting aside the ill-health of the husband. But with it all they are very happy together, and that is the chief thing. And I daresay she will nurse him into health, and keep him going for many a long year. So make your mind at rest. That pathetic look arises from circumstances over which we have no control. Let us go and look at the weather forecast."

We crossed down by the stalls of Bismarck bread to the pillar where they put up the daily prophecy. It was always the same, until we grew tired of looking. "Much rain; thunder-showers; fierce gales." Most of the time they never came; until at last we grew to interpret the readings by the rules of contrary.

"I don't think they are very clever," said her Excellency mildly; "or else something has gone wrong with the weather-office. It is like the old game: when I tell you to let go, hold fast: and when they say *Gewitterregen* I leave my umbrella at home."

This was quite true, and the weather prophecies became quite a standing source of amusement. Kissingen, surrounded by hills, is rather famous for its uncertain skies. Rain is frequent and often sudden, but when the skies are blue, they are very blue indeed, and one feels a strange exhilaration.

"Always the same tale," laughed her Excellency, reading aloud the weather chart; "constant thunder-showers. I am sure that Vulcan is at the head of the weather-office just now, and is manufacturing thunder-bolts. Of course he must get rid of them somehow."

"But there are no such things as thunder-bolts," we objected. "They are a mere popular delusion."

"Then what am I to understand by that phrase 'a bolt from the blue'?" asked her Excellency, looking as if she did not in the least believe our assertion.

"Purely metaphorical," we replied. "A bolt never comes either from the blue or the black. But on our most serene days, do we not often find that some unexpected event turns our tranquil sea into a tempest? If there are times when you feel unusually well or strangely happy, then be upon your guard for a bolt from the blue."

"I have found that so often," murmured her Excellency. "There is indeed only one thing to be done, and that is to sit loosely to the things of this world. I fancy it is rather a dissenting expression in your country, but I fear it is a very true one. Ah, here comes the little authoress to consult the weather-chart. She may spare herself the trouble."

The little *Fräulein* looked just as usual. Her quiet black dress and cape; her pale-gold hair confined in a net half-way down her back, this morning inclining to the right shoulder; her small black bonnet tied under the chin, the bow straggling towards the left; her pale face very tranquil with its large pale blue eyes taking in everything around her. It was evident that she had had her interview with Dr. Diruf. There was a satisfied repose about her expression, only seen when the fourth attempt had been successful.

She came up to the oracle, read its decree, shook her head and looked doubtfully at us: then glanced at the blue skies, which seemed so utterly to contradict the forecast. Then, without uttering a word, but with a little smile directed to E., as much as to say: "Arum lily, you interest me; I should like to know you;" and with a little court-curtsey to her Excellency, of which we might accept as much or as little as we pleased, she went off to the Bismarck stall, took up her packet of bread from amidst the crowd of packets in the baskets, and went home.

This was the custom at the bread stalls. We selected our bread on first going to the gardens, and some people were absurdly fastidious in the matter. For them the bread would be too much baked or too little baked, too long or too short; and half the stall had to be turned over before the exacting fancy was satisfied. This done, the selection was put into a bag and further consigned to an enormous basket at the back, identified by the number of one's room. Thus on going past the stalls after 7.30, one heard a running cry of:

"No. 25 has come for his bread." "100 is asking for her bag—where is 100? It is not in my basket. Someone has carried off No. 100."

As No. 100 was an enormously stout German Frau, someone must have found his task a very severe one.

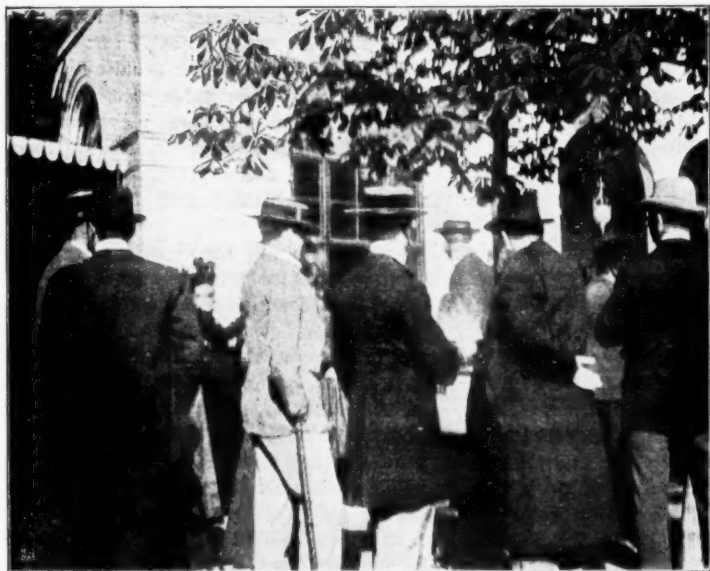
"Frau 100, we apologize; please make a fresh selection."

But this did not please Frau 100, who declared with quite a thundercloud upon her face (thus redeeming the weather-chart) that

the best and crispest of the bread had gone—which was quite true.

"You ought to keep better eyes about you," said the Frau, whilst the thunder-clouds gathered. "Remember that I am No. 100—and no one else has a right to my bag. You should not allow marauders to carry it off. I shall go to the market-place and lodge a complaint against you."

We often wondered at the invariable good temper of the young women who presided at the stall: *the* stall par excellence; for though there were many stalls, there was only one stall *hors concours*. It was always crowded and they needed half-a-dozen hands, every one



ROUND THE HOT WATER APPARATUS.

of them, to get through the work; but no matter what was said to them or how much they were tried, they were always civil and smiling. No. 100 went off waddling like a duck, with a fresh supply of bread, and a rolling of distant thunder in her wake.

Such incidents were frequently occurring, and under the circumstances were unavoidable. We would find our own bag, which no one ever chanced to take a fancy to, and march down the fast-thinning avenue to the hotel, E. carrying her roses, lilies or corn-flowers as the case might be. But never a second time did we offer our pathetic flower-woman two-thirds of her price: rather would we have secretly paid her double. We had done it the first time as an

experiment; it succeeded; but we had not then heard about the sick husband and the struggle for existence. Now that we were behind the scenes, thanks to her Excellency, we were bound to act accordingly.

When breakfast time came, and we had mounted to the third floor and entered our cheerful room, we were often fairly exhausted. Never was the spread of nectar and ambrosia on Olympus hailed with sincerer chorus than that we mentally bestowed on our spotless table spread with the quiet necessities of life. These and our letters made up a feast of reason and a flow of soul which never in any sense grew flat, stale and unprofitable.

We pitied those who took theirs in the hubbub of the crowded coffee-room: a very different matter, it is true, from the pandemonium of the table-d'hôte, when human nature had recovered its midday energy, and the vision of baked meats, not funereal, and the fumes of Rhine wines and other wines, were having their usual effect—but quite sufficiently trying nevertheless. Every table occupied; the tables very close together; the room limited in area; every window hermetically closed; not a breath of air stirring—a doubly trying experience after the fresh morning air of the Kurgarten: this was the daily experience of those who breakfasted with "the common herd" in the general coffee-room.

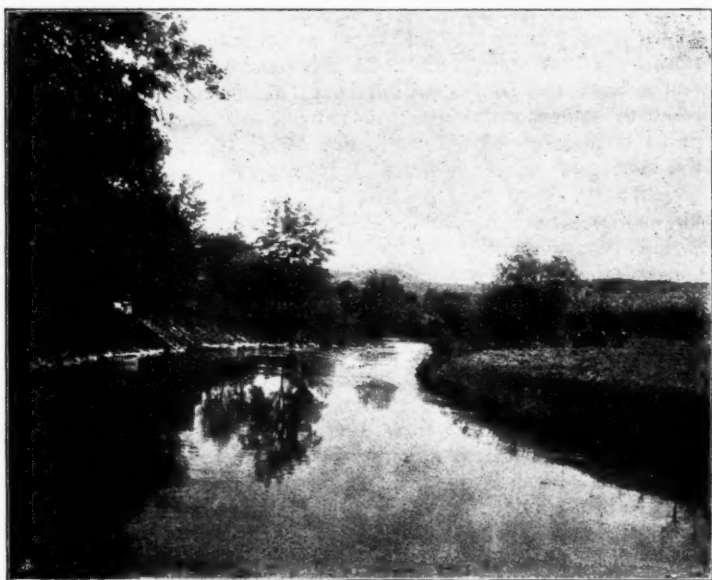
As we have already said, there is nothing the Germans dread like fresh, wholesome air; and once or twice when some one person more advanced in civilization opened a window, the whole room, we were told, was in an uproar and sprang up as one man and one woman. This was courting death; a thousand ills; *Fraus* put on their furs, and men their great coats and mufflers. These delicate people weighing sixteen and seventeen stone, must not be exposed to any wind that might choose to blow. In vain to represent that it was June, and balmy weather; an open window, they argued meant a draught, and draughts meant death: until we laughingly quoted to our informer a warning held out to us in our childhood—and perhaps never thought of since: "Two thin shoes make one cold; two colds, one cough: two coughs, one mahogany box:" an ominous prescription that seems to have been entirely set aside by the new system at Nordrach: where draughts, and wet feet, and wet clothes may not only be indulged in with impunity, but are positively cultivated—and consumptives lose their disease, and grow strong and broad and healthy.

Of course in the Kissingen coffee-room the majority conquered. The head waiter was appealed to, and had no resource but to decide against reason and good sense, fresh air and the grateful winds of heaven: and the window was closed. The majority breathed again: the room grew stifling and oppressive; someone likened it to the Black Hole of Calcutta; and the Germans were happy as they quietly mopped their faces and felt this was as good as a Turkish bath—without paying, too.

Compared with this, what wonder that we thought our room paradise ; revelled in the open windows, the pure fresh air that blew down over yonder wooded height ; the snow-white table cloth and the perfect waiter—and our budget of letters from absent but not forgetful friends awaiting us morning after morning.

Then E. would presently retire to her own room and lose herself in correspondence : a man who hath friends must show himself friendly, and the firing cannot be all on one side : until the hour came for what Miss O'Grady called the champagne bath.

E. was constant to her "first love," that is, the Royal Kurhausbad, to give it its full title. But the woman who dispensed the tickets



ON THE RIVER.

there had taken a fancy to the Fräulein who looked so much like an arum lily ; and day after day she gave her of her best and never kept her waiting.

We were less favoured. Not belonging to the angelic portion of creation, we must be thankful for small mercies. So we gave up the Royal Kurhaus, and day after day took passage in the little steamer to the Salinen. The men grew to watch for our coming, and would delay the boat if we were a minute behind time.

We would first "depose" E. at the Royal Kurhaus, then make our way across the gardens, and through the bazaar to the river bank.

This "bazaar" was the nearest approach to an Oriental atmosphere

that Kissingen could furnish : though there was no special reason why Kissingen in South Germany should have anything Turkish or Egyptian about it. And it existed more in idea than in fact. There were no Eastern carpets exposed for sale ; no priceless Persian rugs, such as one now and then, but not often, finds in the bazaars of Constantinople ; dreams of colour and beauty that have survived from mediæval times : rugs that once adorned a wall like tapestry, or were used as a prayer carpet by the faithful. Such treasures do not find their way into Bavaria.

But the stalls were a long row on each side, more or less in the open air like the Eastern institution : and the wares were choice Bohemian glass, and carved ivories, and old lace that especially appealed to the ladies ; whilst every here and there was thrown in a "frisir salon," where they sold those mysterious adornments that the sterner sex look upon with awe and veneration : plaits for the back of the head and fringes for the front : and "washes" that changed black to golden, and white to brown : whilst many a lady went in pale and middle-aged, and came out young and brilliant, thanks to the Bloom of Ninon, or some other mysterious and equally terrible preparation. Who shall say that in these days the Ethiopian does not change his skin ?

The bazaar was the end of all things as far as the shops were concerned. After this came the shady avenues of chestnuts that led to the Salinen : half an hour's pleasant walk for those who did not prefer the steamer.

Just at the end of the stalls, on the left, the boats started. They were very small, but never crowded, for the Germans are great walkers as well as frugal-minded. And the men, spying us in the distance would not loose from their moorings, though time was up, knowing that backsheesh waited upon the quiet attention. It was a very pleasant break in the day, this visit to the Salinen, filling up the measure of one's time, and adding something of the *sauce piquante* of hunger to one's luncheon.

In spite of the very disagreeable dame du guichet, who was generally unpopular—once having discovered the virtue of the Salinen baths, we were constant to them.

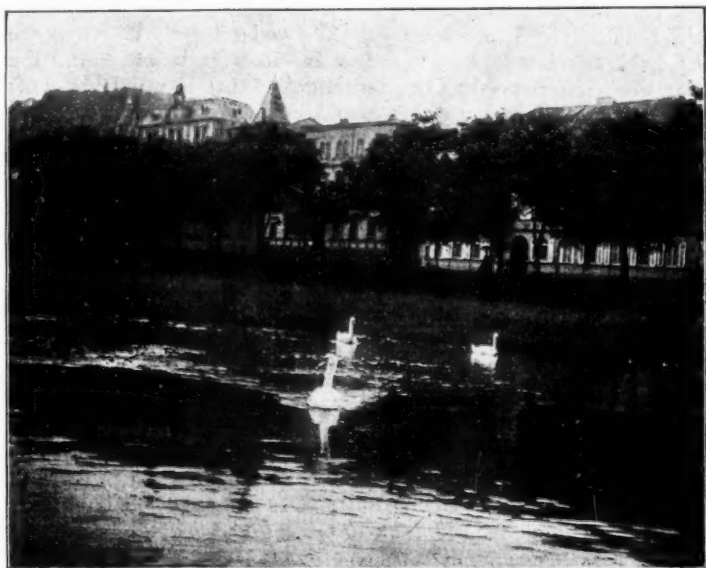
On this particular morning when the literary Fräulein had found us consulting the weather oracle, had shaken her head mournfully, and gone off with her Bismarck bread to her solitary breakfast—we were certain it was solitary—it was decreed that we should meet again. As we turned the corner of the stalls, and came in front of the green, and the river, and the swans, the bell was ringing and the men were loosening the rope. Catching sight of us it was quickly hooked on again : and there in the prow was the Fräulein with her quiet black dress and pale face and golden hair.

The prow was a small space with seats for two, just beyond the

cabin, where you were beautifully secluded and nothing in front of you to disturb the charm of the scenery.

She looked very pensive and almost interesting as she sat there in her solitude. So we passed through the cabin, where the Germans were hugging their great coats and their furs and clutching their umbrellas as if they never meant to let them go again; the doors swung to, and we took the vacant seat opposite the *Fräulein*: a *solitude à deux*.

She glanced at us, and seeing us alone, her eyes seemed to say: "Where is the Arum lily? has she retired to the paradise of flowers?"



THE SWANS.

The swans sailed majestically round the prow asking to be fed; pure, beautiful-looking birds but greedy—all outward show; the engines were set in motion, and the moving waters troubling their serenity, they made for their home which was now in the very middle of the stream.

A frantic passenger turned the corner with a rush and hailed the boat with his very large umbrella, but he might just as well have told the sun to put back after his rising. The boat went calmly on its way. He would have the pleasure of waiting and using strong German language (it is very strong in German) for twenty minutes.

"Poor man," said *Fräulein*; "what an expenditure of useless

energy and wicked words, and all to save twenty minutes. How strange it is that people cannot go through life calmly."

"Then you also patronise the Salinen?" we observed, passing over the frantic German.

"No; I do not take the baths," replied Fräulein; "I only drink the waters. But if I took the baths ten times over, I would have nothing to do with that rude woman at the guichet. The day is so lovely that it tempted me to this little excursion. It is an earthly paradise, this river. Perhaps I think so much of it because I have seen so few rivers, but it seems to me perfection."

In its way it really was so: one only regretted the journey was so soon over.

"This morning the skies are so unusually blue, the air so clear," said Fräulein. "There is an exquisite veil of tranquillity over the world. I felt I must take to the water—like the swans. And the poor weather chart said 'Donnerwetter.' That is no doubt what that poor man is saying with the umbrella over and over again, and one is just as incredible as the other. Is it not beautiful?" she added in her quiet way, looking upon everything until her pale blue eyes quite sparkled.

The boat was steaming upward between the rushes that bordered the river banks, and as the water stirred and agitated them they made that strange music which some have likened to Pan playing upon his pipes. Never had the water been more blue, or the reflections more vivid. Under the chestnuts in the avenue people were walking to and fro, but they were too far off to disturb our serenity.

"Oh, look at those wild roses!" cried Fräulein in ecstasy, as we passed a series of bushes laden with the lovely blossom. "They quite scent the air, and cry aloud to be gathered to our bosom. There are no roses like the wild roses. Those in the Kurgarten look as though they were artificially cultivated; these as though they came straight from Eden. So it seems to me. Ah! see!"

A lovely kingfisher, all the colours of the rainbow, who had been courting the roses, darted out and flew up the stream, his wings flashing in the sunshine.

"My favourite bird and my favourite flower," said Fräulein, with quite the pink of excitement upon her usually pale cheeks. "I am well repaid for my little excursion. And the music of the reeds and rushes—how beautiful it is. It always seems to me suggestive of one long poem: the song that nature is ever singing. I am never tired of listening—when I have the chance of hearing it."

We wondered whether the Fräulein's writings were very sentimental—they would rather have to be so to suit the German taste: but there was a quiet look on her face which seemed to say that her sentiment would be under control of her reason.

This morning she had some excuse for indulging the vein. The

day was as perfect as the scene. Nothing in or about Kissingen equals this little river journey to the Salinen, with the reeds and the roses, the kingfishers that flashed about, and the windings of the river, all the flood of glorious sunshine and the deep blue skies. Fräulein, in her quiet black gown and pale face and golden hair, quietly took it all in ; seemed to drink it in as a thirsty man drinks down a draught of sparkling wine ; nothing escaped her large pale eyes, which grew almost beautiful.

"I am glad I came this morning," she said. "This is so much lovelier than the alleys of the Kurgarten which never change, with their uninteresting crowds which always do the same things and say



AT THE SALINEN : WAITING TO START.

the same words, like pieces of machinery that are wound up and set going. I see you always patronise that poor flower-woman with the appealing look—and I am glad."

"Then you too have observed it," we remarked. "Do you know her?"

"Oh, quite well. I am an old habitué of Kissingen—and so is she. I have to hunt out histories to work up into fiction, and I made it my duty to find her out and visit her home and so grew to know her. It was difficult, but difficulties never daunt me."

This was going far beyond anything we had dreamed of or her Excellency had attempted. But then Fräulein belonged to a younger

generation than her Excellency, who did not pass her life in weaving fictions.

"And what did you find?" we asked. "She seems to us to have been born dumb."

"Once in her cottage that disappears," said Fräulein. "The string of her tongue seems to unloosen. But she was always specially quiet and gentle. In her own ménage, surrounded by her children, and when her husband comes in from work, she looks the happiest woman on earth—but always in a quiet way."

"Is her husband so very sickly—hovering between two worlds, like Mahomet's coffin?"

"Much nearer earth than heaven, I should say," smiled Fräulein. "He is delicate, no doubt, but I think any office might insure his life. A steady-going man, engaged in wholesome work, with a wife who looks well after him, and won't let him sit in wet clothes and boots, for all they say at Nordrach. And quite right too. They go too far, as it seems to me."

The boat steered round a bend in the river, where the wild roses were thickest. Beyond them, men and women were working in the fields, carrying hay. Down the white road beyond the fields a group of bicyclists were careering alone at express speed, raising clouds of dust; their laughter and talk reaching us as faint echoes from a distance. Beyond the road again rose the well wooded hills, with their pleasant, never-ending walks: where occasionally you came upon an unexpected coffee house: a "Swiss cottage" presided over by maidens who dispensed their favours with smiles and good nature, and now and then—if they thought you were not quite up to things—would make a mistake in their reckoning, and charge you more than the regular tariff. Only now and then: for the most part they were quite honest and straightforward.

Again a kingfisher darted out from the rose bushes, all his brilliant colours flashing in the sunshine. This time he flew quite close to the Fräulein as though to wish her good morrow.

"It must be the very same bird," she said, "and he has followed us all the way up the river. He knows I like all birds: birds, beasts, and fishes—I love them all. And birds, when I am quite alone, will often come and talk to me, as they used to do to Thoreau. Sometimes I think I shall end my life like him, by going to live in a lonely forest, and making companions of the creatures that roam about, and the birds that fly in the air."

The tall chimney and the buildings of the Salinen, and another sharp winding in the river announced that we were nearing our journey's end. Fräulein's little excursion was over. She sighed, but in the plenitude of her satisfaction. The journey though short had been full of charm.

"This has been a success," she said; "I shall come again. But things do not happen twice exactly alike. Next time the kingfisher

will not appear, and the roses will be past their bloom, and perhaps the skies will not be as bright. Now I shall go on to the Upper Saline, where Bismarck used to live, but where he will live never again. One talks of him in the past tense. His day is over and a great day it has been. Oh, I knew him well—and so did my father. He was a man never understood; always fighting against adverse influences, and always conquering. One of the most charming men in manner you could imagine; one of the most sensitive in disposition. That was Bismarck; a man full of kindness for all, but of the most intense affection for his own kith and kin. Yes, there is no doubt of it. People say he was crafty, unscrupulous, ready to do anything and sacrifice anybody to accomplish his own ends. I reply that that has been greatly exaggerated: and I also reply that he was a statesman, a diplomatist, in the strictest sense of the word; and it behoved him not to show his hand any more than I show my hand when I am playing whist. There is the difference between our Bismarck and your Gladstone—if I may say so. Bismarck has almost transformed the map of Europe; he created; all he did will live after him. Every act contributed to the glory and consolidation of the Empire. All Gladstone did had a directly opposite effect. You cannot mention a single good or great thing that he accomplished. You cannot quote a single great thought that he ever gave utterance to. He did not create—he destroyed. He was gradually dismembering your Empire, and bringing you into the condition of Little England—the new term, I believe. He began his mischievous political career by handing over the Ionian Islands to Greece somewhere about 1864—for I suppose he did not really do much politically before then. They were flourishing and prosperous; the people were happy and contented; it was one of your chief military stations in the Mediterranean. What has happened? To-day the islands are steeped in poverty; the population has gone down; they are dead and lifeless; useless to Greece; a misery to themselves; a reproach to the man who brought all this about. That was your Gladstone; that was how he began his reign; and that is how he went on all through his life; doing irretrievable harm and mischief.”

Fräulein had waxed almost eloquent and energetic in her little political discourse. We had not expected the outburst, and listened in silence. Perhaps she noticed this, for half apologising she said with a quiet smile:

“You wonder to hear me talk thus. But my father was a great politician, and I have inherited his taste. If I had been a man I would have been in parliament. You do not make response, but I believe you think as I do. Great countries owe everything to their great men. Bismarck was a great man; and your Beaconsfield was great—Bismarck acknowledged it; but in fifty years’ time; nay in twenty years’ time; nay in ten years’ time, there will be no great Memorial stone in History for Gladstone; and his name will never be

in the Valhalla consecrated to heroes and great men. Never, never, never. It is impossible. You may collect subscriptions, and erect statues, and raise memorials to him—it will be all in vain. The future verdict will be that for England it is a pity he ever was born."

We had reached our destination. The little literary Fräulein, in whom we were more interested than ever, made us a curtsy and went her way towards the Upper Saline, where once Bismarck was wont to come; and where for one season his great antagonist, the Empress Augusta (Empress thanks to Bismarck) also took up her abode. She and the great Chancellor were ever at variance. She was a clever woman with a strong will, and her policy was peace at any price. Her influence with the old Emperor was great, and so for many years Bismarck's work was very uphill, often retarded, sometimes had to be abandoned.


But the little literary Fräulein has beguiled us into the world of politics, the very last subject to be touched upon in Kissingen, where the very first condition of the cure is:

"A mind free from care and worry; all exciting topics to be avoided; arguments and controversies to be absolutely banished. Life must pass easily and pleasantly; *il faut que tout roule sur le velours*; dull care must be put aside, and Melancholy must be thrown to the winds."

There is not a word to be said against these rules; they are excellent; and if we could take them with us wherever we go and carry them out, we should probably find ourselves in perfect health, even without the healing waters of Kissingen.

On our return we recounted our adventure to the Arum lily.

"It looks very much like a planned thing," laughed E. "Fräulein has distinctly shown herself a great diplomatist: a sort of female Bismarck, though with an interval of many degrees. That seat on the prow, that *solitude à deux*, was extremely well managed, and almost worthy of the Chancellor. If Miss O'Grady were here she would make a romance out of the whole matter, though I don't quite see where the ghost would come in; but her inventive faculty is large and she would manage it somehow. As she is not here, I shall take her Excellency into my confidence and ask her how we are to circumvent this Machiavellian plot.—Oh, to-night there is a concert in the Kursaal; Miss W. and her sister are anxious to go to it, and so am I; I have asked them to take supper with us at the Casino and we hope you will treat us to nectar and ambrosia. Yesterday they had Irish stew again—followed by nightmare."



DEAD SEA FRUIT.

BY LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE

CHAPTER VIII.

"THREE years, Donna Gemma, and the winter has come again, and all Europe is ringing with Giglio's fame, and he does not come!"

"Patience, my child, he will come soon. Cristina, how wasted and ill you look, there is nothing left of you! You must try and look better or he will hardly recognise his little wife."

"Dear Donna Gemma, I try for your sake, because of your goodness to me, which my whole life's devotion can never repay. Do you think he will come in the winter? Or will he walk in again at the terrace window—out of which he went away—in the heat of the summer days?"

"In the summer, child, certainly in the summer. Now sit still and listen, for I wish to read to you a letter I received to-day from an Englishman who once spent a long summer with us up here. He was a young artist and he had had fever, and my brother found him living in Florence and brought him here."

"Who is he?" said Cristina, becoming interested. "They say that all artists know each other—they always meet somewhere. Perhaps he may know Giglio."

"Yes, he speaks of Giglio in this letter."

"Oh, read it—read it, dear Donna Gemma."

Donna Gemma opened a letter which lay beside her on the table and read it aloud. It was written in Italian. The first pages were about a friend of the writer, who was studying music in Florence, and who wished to take one of the apartments in the Castello de Pauli for the following spring. Then it went on somewhat abruptly: "'Can you tell me, dear Donna Gemma, anything about the antecedents of the famous sculptor Santeodoro? There is a mystery about him which I am anxious to solve. I remember him long ago in Calleone's studio, a pupil of some imagination, but no promise. He took the prize for an Ariadne, not because his work was good, but because every other pupil's was worse. We did not know each other. I was only a short time there sketching, and I had already begun to earn the "quattrini" in black and white, but I from my trade have become a keen observer, and I am puzzled. I have several chalk studies of him at that date, for he was very handsome. Afterwards

someone told me that he had married. If so, where is the lady? I met Santeodoro again at his studio a month ago. He is a curious study. This unpromising pupil has become a stupendous Master! His work is splendid. The genius must have developed late and through some appalling suffering, for the man is fearfully changed."

"Ah!" cried Cristina, clasping her hands with a moan of pain. "My poor Giglio!"

"Shall I go on?"

"Yes, yes. In spite of the pain it is life to hear of him."

Donna Gemma went on reading. "'The whole look of the poor fellow is changed. His eyes, which used to have the soft wistfulness of your large-eyed compatriots, now blaze with fierce excitement; he is so thin that every bone in the face stands out sharp and white with black shadows; he is restless to a degree I cannot describe. I wanted to see him work, I wanted to see those nervous fingers exercising their marvellous skill, but he would not have it. We might have quarrelled but I would not, for I was sorry for him. Where is the wife? Has the metamorphosis anything to do with her? Is she dead? No, that would not account for it. Is she false? It may well have been the work of a woman. They are such fiends sometimes.'"

"How shall I bear it?" cried Cristina. "Go on, dear Signora."

"Well, the day after my encounter with Santeodoro I went to his house and found him gone. This was three months ago. No one knows his address, no one has the least idea where he is. I have promised Lord Rawcliffe to find out if I can, for he is executing a work for him, a statue of Portia. I thought of you, you may know; for you, I hear, are still in touch with some of the artist world who used to know and love your brother, and if you can throw any light on the matter, more people than I can number will be glad. The Cupid and Psyche was sold in America for five thousand guineas."

"Where can he be?" cried Cristina, raising her white face. "I am the last person in the whole world who would know."

"It is very strange," said Donna Gemma gravely. "And not a soul that I know of can give us the clue."

All through these years Cristina had lived on with her old friend. Once or twice a married sister had come to see her, and on hearing the history of her husband's desertion, had scolded her vehemently, and had desired her to write humbly and plead for forgiveness. This Cristina was ready enough to do, but she knew in her heart that it would be of no use, and she never knew whether her husband received her poor little confessions or not, for he never noticed them.

One of Cristina's sisters even offered to come and live with her, but the deadly dullness of life in the country soon proved too much for Florentine vivacity and she fled before it. No thought of dullness ever entered Cristina's head. She was too much absorbed in her sorrow and her remorse, and the leaden days passed slowly, only

brightened by every rumour of success and growing fame which reached her and which seemed to bring her more near to Giglio's return.

Donna Gemma gave her Jack Thorne's letter. To her it was like some meagre unnourishing food to one starving, even to see her husband's name in the letter, and to know that some stranger, to herself unknown, had seen and spoken with him. Cristina holding it fast in her little burning hand, fastened a fur cloak round her and went down to the room in which Giglio's unfinished statue still stood.

She still kept that room as her own private apartment. It no longer looked like a working room, it was intensely clean and orderly. The clay figure in spite of Cristina's anxious care was cracked and crumbling, for it was unfitted to bear changes of atmosphere.

Cristina sat down and looked at it with a kind of despair—it was the cause of all her trouble and misery. She threw herself back in a chair, drew her fur cloak up to her chin, and placing her feet on the brass scaldino filled with hot ashes, she gave herself up to thought.

Could she endure this life any longer? She felt that it was impossible. Donna Gemma's tender consolation had altogether ceased either to comfort or to control her. Her advice was timid and unsatisfactory, and it seemed to her that this hungry longing for her husband's return and his forgiveness would kill her if she were to wait much longer in inaction.

Once or twice this wish to start off in pursuit of him had come upon her with the like vehemence, and Donna Gemma had striven with all her power to overcome it. The idea terrified the old Italian lady beyond words—it was too terribly bold and dangerous. What Italian husband would endure that his young wife should start off by herself, unprotected, in search even of himself? Italian husbands kept their wives in an almost Eastern subjection and under close care.

Once Cristina exclaimed: "But after all, Donna Gemma, what other Italian husband would desert his wife, as Giglio has done, leaving her alone and unprotected?"

"He would not have done so had he not been able to trust you," said Donna Gemma quickly; but Cristina only sobbed: "God keep me from such trust as that! It is more like hate."

Donna Gemma had never moved in her life from home—six miles round was the full extent of her travels—but she thought she knew the world, and was very well able to advise her young friend.

"Men are not like women," she said solemnly. "They expect to be obeyed; and a man whose wife pursued him over the world would say of her that she was actuated by no good motive, would accuse her of jealousy, curiosity, disobedience, and she would forfeit all his confidence."

"Not if she went to him on her knees, as I should do, crying that I should want his forgiveness and his love! That, Heaven help me! I cannot live without him."

"He has left you here," said Donna Gemma decidedly, "and here

he expects you to remain until his return. He is your husband, my child, you must obey."

On this day, however, when all her wild misery had been rekindled by Jack Thorne's letter, Cristina brooded over her plan without consulting her old friend, and it gradually grew into shape in her mind. She would go! She would go straight to London, find out from Jack Thorne how to look for her husband, and never rest until she had found him.

So absorbed was she in her thoughts that when a low knock came on the door-like window she did not hear it.

The knock was repeated, and then the window was pushed open and someone stepped in.

Cristina sprang to her feet with a sharp cry—the opening window, the crunch of gravel outside, brought back to her the vision always present in her mind. Was he coming to her that way? The way in which he had gone?

But she sank back trembling and covered her face with her hands, for it was only a familiar woman's figure which had crossed the threshold, and her self-control gave way—she sobbed bitterly.

The girl who had walked in, with Italian absence of ceremony, was Nanna Zei. She had seen Cristina through the window, leaning back languidly in her chair, and she had a question to ask her—a matter-of-fact question—concerning the washing of the soft muslin and lace fichus which she always wore. Giglio had loved the pretty fashion, and with that in her memory Cristina ordered an unfailing supply of them.

Nanna had risen in the world. She had now a *clientèle* of her own, and had become the head of the highest skilled labour of her trade—the *blanchissage de fin*.

When she saw Cristina's pitiful crying, Nanna's heart melted within her. She threw aside the basket of freshly-ironed laces that she was carrying, and going up swiftly, knelt down beside the sobbing girl.

"But Signora, dear Signora, what is it? I entreat you do not weep like this?"

Cristina threw her arms round her neck.

"Oh, Nanna, Nanna!" she cried. "I shall die if I do not go and find him!"

"Go! But when would you go, dear, dearest Signora? You cannot mean it! What would the Signor Maestro do if he came back and found you gone? Madonna Santa! But he would be angry."

"I cannot live without him, Nanna! I want to go and find him!"

"Pazienza!" exclaimed Nanna. "But men do not like to be followed."

"You do not understand!" cried Cristina petulantly. "Nobody understands! I want to go to him as a penitent to a shrine."

"Ah, so!" exclaimed Nanna. "But that—that is a good idea. Has the Signora consulted the Priore?"

"Yes, but he only says, 'Wait, wait, your punishment is to wait!' and I am worn out with waiting. He does not come! Maria Santissima! He does not come!"

Nanna paused for a moment; as she looked at Cristina, her eyes filled with tears. She spoke decidedly:

"After all, Signora, the Priore is but a man, and we are womenfolk! I never heard that it was wrong for a wife to follow her own husband, eh?"

Cristina sat up and dried her eyes.

"You give me courage, Nanna! That is true, is it not?"

"True! I have no doubt of that."

"And yet, Nanna, have you not always said, 'Guide your doings by what the Priore says, and you will be safe'?"

"True, true, Signora mine, but in this life one must make up one's mind first, and get the blessing on it afterwards sometimes. Is not that true? *Santi Apostoli!* It was never a sin to follow one's husband."

"I will go!" cried Cristina, springing to her feet. "But, oh, Nanna, it is terrible to go out all alone into a great wicked world, and in England they are all heretics."

"And our poor Signore is alone and perhaps ill, *poveretto*, and without a Christian near him."

"Nay, he has Gian Martino—but ill? Why do you say it?"

"Did not Donna Gemma tell me that he had not been heard of these three months? If he is not ill, where can he be?"

"I am going! I am going at once, Nanna! No one shall stop me. You will not desert me, *carina*. You will come with me? I will pay you well!"

"I!"

"Yes, you, Nanna! You must come with me. I cannot go alone. I have money, I will pay you well. Nanna, you cannot refuse me."

Nanna was rapidly doing a calculation in her head.

"I should have to pay sixty francs a month to Serafina to take my place. If you, Signora, will pay that and my journeys and board, I will go with you."

"But it is not enough, Nanna. Something also for yourself."

"Not a franc—not a soldo! For myself, dear Signora, see, it will be happiness enough to be with you, and take care of you. Had it been a few months ago I could not have gone, but now Gian Martino's old mother is dead, and I have nothing to keep me."

"Ah, you were very good to her, Nanna!"

"She was all I had in the world!" said the girl simply. "And when Gian comes back, he will find all the great sums of money he sent her safe in the bank. She did not want money, rest her soul!"

She took enough, or I should say, I took enough to give her all she needed, of the very best. The rest he will find intact when he comes home. Eh, eh—he was a good son!”

She wiped away an involuntary tear from her smiling face.

“And you, Nanna? Will you wait for him?”

“*Chi sa?* Who knows?” she said, shrugging her shoulders. “I have a good business, and Nino Bruni of Fiesole does not want for *quattrini*.”

“Take him, Nanna, take him; he is a good man.”

“I do not know—not if it would disappoint Gian—for after all, who would take a poor hunchback like him except myself? Nino Bruni can have his choice.”

“Perhaps, Nanna, when you and I go into the world together and find my husband and your Gian, it will be more easy to decide.”

“*Chi sa?*” repeated Nanna, with another shrug.

Then the two set to work to make crude, ignorant little plans. There was no one to help them except perhaps Nino Bruni, who had once travelled to Perugia and Orvieto, and even as far as Rome, for his business was an increasing one, and as Nanna observed:

“He knew all about trains and stations, and could even take their tickets for them.”

With such an experienced adviser at their backs, they were prepared to brave all sorts of objections from Donna Gemma and even the Signor Priore.

But neither of these two good kind friends made any objection at all. Donna Gemma was deeply thankful that Nanna was to accompany her darling. She had the strongest confidence in her shrewd peasant wits.

The Priore, instead of advising them to wait, bade them “go at once in Heaven’s name.” Perhaps somewhere in Jack Thorne’s letter he scented out a possible tragedy. He looked very grave when he counselled and blessed poor little tremulous Cristina.

To Nanna he gave very practical advice. She was to doff the gay kerchief which had hitherto bound her splendid black hair, and wear instead a bonnet—actually a bonnet, such as no peasant may wear.

“After all,” said the good Priore, taking snuff. “You are now the padrona of a profitable business, so it is not incongruous, and it is neither presumptuous nor vain, since it is my order, and does not come from yourself.”

“As the Signor Priore desires,” said Nanna piously.

Nino took them to the station, and saw them start. He took their tickets for London, not for England as they had requested. They had got over their worst farewells, and they left him staring after the train with a full heart.

Their faces wore the look of firm and anxious determination of those who have undertaken a most appalling venture.

CHAPTER IX.

THE storms raged for weeks round Landbury during that terrible winter. The great gaunt house was full of draughts which cut like a knife; even roaring fires seemed to make the bare rooms more full of those insidious streams of ice-cold air, worse than exposure to the full blast of Heaven. Giglio lay in bed fearfully ill, and Gian sat day and night by his bedside till he was well-nigh worn out by his single-handed nursing.

Rheumatic fever had laid its torturing hand on the unfortunate sculptor, and both lungs and heart were affected.

The household consisted of an old woman belonging to the house, a village-wife engaged by her to cook for the two foreign gentlemen, and a boy who ran messages and did the rough work of the studio. When, three or four days after his exposure to the wild storm on the beach, Giglio's fever became furious delirium, old Simmons the housekeeper sent for the doctor. She was at her wits' end, for Gian could not speak English, and could scarcely understand a word of it.

Dr. Curtis was a young fellow fresh from the hospitals, and he at once took the deepest interest in the case. He, unfortunately, mistook the extreme abstemiousness and scanty household of the two Italians for poverty, which he respected, and refrained from ordering the expensive luxuries which might have mitigated poor Giglio's sufferings, but all that skill could do, young Curtis did, and when matters got worse and worse, in his earnestness he shared Gian's watches, and during the short hours of rest absolutely necessary to the poor faithful Italian, Curtis took his place and fought hard for the life hanging in the balance.

When the delirium gave way Dr. Curtis had not time to congratulate himself, for suffering so great ensued that even to watch his master brought the beads of perspiration to Gian's anxious brow. For one terrible night the torturing rheumatism gripped the muscles of the chest, and when morning dawned the patient was so spent that both the watchers thought that he was going.

But when the long day merged once more into evening, an improvement, so slight that only the skilled eye could detect it, began.

"Your master is better, Gian," said the doctor, drawing him into the next room while he slowly re-screwed the top on to the sheath of his clinical thermometer.

"Ah," exclaimed Gian. "If only you would bleed him."

He spoke in Italian, but Dr. Curtis had been struggling with a conversation book for days, and he understood.

"No, no," he exclaimed. "That would end all! He has no strength to lose."

Gian could not understand. "He will die if you will not do it!" he implored.

"I tell you, my friend, that it would kill him. Heavens! How can I make the man understand?"

From the next room came the pitiful sound of oppressed breathing, of the short cough which told of lung mischief.

Dr. Curtis sat down. This strong young Englishman, with his kind blue eyes and short crop of close curling yellow hair, had a tender heart. He saw the agony of anxiety in the strange sensitive face of the poor hunchback, and in broken Italian he set himself patiently to explain that the treatment most calculated to put a final end to his master was to bleed him.

Gian only shook his head sullenly, and when Curtis was obliged to go, he was very careful to take away all his instruments with him. He could not return that night; he had a large country practice and was a busy man.

Gian was left alone all night with his master. He had the needful paraphernalia about him, the soup and brandy, the lemonade, the great jug of fresh milk.

At first Giglio lay very still, his breathing was oppressed, but Gian, glancing at him, thought that he slept, and he scarcely dared to move.

The wind howled and moaned round the house, wailing like spirits in pain. Far below the distant bang, bang of some unfastened door sounded in the weird night like minute-guns.

It got upon the strained nerves of the over-tired man at last; he grew nervous. He was seated by the fire in a heavy leather arm-chair with a shaded lamp on the table beside him.

Presently the sick man moaned, and Gian rose softly to his feet and went up to him. He was wide awake, and when Gian bent over him he saw a pair of great luminous eyes looking up into his with that awful unseeing stare which shows that the brain is again wandering.

Gian's heart died within him; he shrank back and for a moment lost all courage.

Giglio began to speak low but very fast and to grow excited.

"Why should a man suffer the pains of hell when he has done nothing to deserve it?" he said rapidly to himself. "But of course it is Cristina's doing; she has always despised me, always! And I suppose she thought it was the only way to force my ambition, but it was unkind, and I must get away from her, away as far and as fast as I can, where she can never look at me with her great scornful eyes which burn me through and through—and oh dear! oh me! oh me! Something will sit on my chest so that I cannot breathe! What are you doing here?" he shouted suddenly, so that Gian leapt back. "If you want to kill me, do it and have done with it, not by running a red hot pole through my shoulders and out at my chest. Oh! quickly for the love of heaven! Get it over! For Cristina goes on saying it again and again, 'No master but a slave!' Gian!"

"I am here, dear, dear master."

"Cristina will not let me rest. Why does she say it is so bad? I have such beautiful ideas, and I try! If one tries long enough, one can win the great prize. Some call the great prize Fame! Cristina calls it that! and Jack called it Success, and I call it Rest. Don't look at me like that! Do you remember the little organ-grinder with eyes like Nanna's, and how she was homesick and we paid her journey home? She was so happy! so happy to go home. So happy, Gian."

"Dear master."

"Do not leave me, for if you do, Cristina will come with her scornful eyes! No master but a slave!"

Gian turned up the lamp, he wanted to see Giglio better. He shivered when he saw. The dry parched lips, the hard glitter of fever in the eyes, the burning skin; and all the old instincts rushed upon him. His master would die, and this ignorant English doctor would not do the only thing to save his life; he refused to bleed him.

Gian knew how it was done. Every spring he and his friends would go to Pietro the herb-doctor and have several ounces of blood taken away.

"In this cold country," shivered poor Gian, "doubtless they have no blood to spare, but with us Italians it is different. I shall risk it; I know what is best; I will bleed him myself."

Giglio was quieter now, but he was talking fast to himself in muttering tones. Gian drew out a very sharp, firm little pen-knife and rapidly tore up a linen towel into bandages. Giglio made no resistance when he bared his emaciated arm; he went on murmuring to himself and humming scraps of songs.

At first the blood would not come, but at last it began to flow, and Gian, kneeling by his master's bed, rejoiced, for as the blood flowed the talking and murmuring grew slower and at last ceased altogether. Giglio grew very calm and drowsy. Then Gian thought that his work was done, and with clumsy skill he bound up the arm and stopped the bleeding.

Then he came and sat down by his master and waited.

He was sleeping now heavily, his breathing loud and rattling, and the heat of his hand was terrific. But Gian felt that he had done the right thing, and was satisfied.

The hours passed on; the storm fell, and a deep profound silence followed. Gian rose now and then and attempted to pour down the nourishment on which his master's life depended, but it was very difficult; it seemed almost as if the power of swallowing were gone.

"He sleeps too heavily," he said to himself. "It means that he is better. I must be patient."

About four o'clock in the morning there was a stir in the house, a hurried though cautious step running up the stairs, and Dr. Curtis came in. He had allowed himself a few hours' sleep and had rushed back.

He threw open the lampshades and lighted candles, for the dawn as yet gave no light.

Gian looked livid, so drawn and grey and haggard was his strange face.

"Hullo!" exclaimed the young doctor. "What is this?"

A quick, anxious examination, then he rose from bending over the patient.

"How long has this been going on?" he said. "His temperature is one hundred and seven."

"Maria Santissima!" exclaimed poor Gian.

"How long since this change?" repeated the doctor sternly.

"Four hours. He was wandering again worse than ever, and I—I——"

Dr. Curtis looked at him fixedly.

"What did you do?" he said. "But I need not ask." And he pointed to drops of blood on the sheets and the bandage on Giglio's arm. "Heaven help you! You have destroyed the last hope."

Gian only stared at him. He knew that he had saved his life; he could not understand it. But everything seemed to be going from him, there was a rushing in his ears, and he knew no more.

The next thing he could remember was awaking in another room, strong fumes of brandy in the air, and the sun gleaming through the open window. From insensibility he had passed into the deep sleep of exhaustion.

In the next room Curtis was fighting a hand-to-hand battle with death, for the wings of Azrael were darkening the sky.

When he could find one spare moment, Dr. Curtis searched every pocket, every table-drawer he could find, and he came upon one letter only which could give a clue to the friends or acquaintances of the young sculptor. It was a note from Jack Thorne written to him in London asking him to dinner.

Before eleven o'clock a telegram reached the kindly artist containing these words:

"If you have any clue to friends or relatives of Giglio Santeodoro, send them here at once. He is dying.—Curtis, M.D., Landbury."

CHAPTER X.

"NANNA, people say that the sea is so terrible," said Cristina in a low voice as the two tired women left the train and were hurried rapidly along the station at Boulogne.

"Che, che! If it is, it is only a bad hour in one's life," said Nanna courageously. "And what is an hour in one's life? Courage, Signora mine. It will soon be over."

"Move on, ladies, move on!" said a loud, cheery voice, and they

were hustled by the more experienced passengers along the gangway. They did not know where to go. They were pale and worn with insufficient sleep and insufficient food.

A kindly woman with daughters, who spoke French, saw them sitting shivering and forlorn on a bench. She was anxious to get downstairs herself, but she was too kind to leave the two pale Italian girls without any attempt to help them, and she was rewarded by the eager gratitude with which they clung to her.

It was well for them to be taken downstairs, for the wild winter weather was at its height, and when the crossing was over the passengers who crept ashore were pale wrecks of what they had been.

Cristina had lost heart and could not help crying. Nanna looked stern and white, like one who has been through an appalling ordeal. The kind people who had been so good to them were met on the pier by a whole party of welcoming relations, while Cristina and Nanna holding fast to each other crept faintly up the gangway.

"Signora Santeodoro."

What was this? Cristina looked up. It was a kind voice and it spoke Italian.

"Am I not right? You are Signora Santeodoro? Let me carry some of your things?"

"Yes, that is my name, but, Signore, I do not know who you are. Will you forgive me and tell me?" she faltered.

"My name is Thorne—Jack Thorne," said the stranger. "I heard of your coming from Donna Gemma de Pauli. She committed you to my charge, and I am glad to have found you."

Cristina saw a tall kindly-faced Englishman with fair hair and a keen, clever face, close-shaved. His honest grey eyes inspired her with confidence, and Nanna felt an indescribable sense of relief and gratitude. She had borne up bravely during this terrible journey, but she was thankful for help at the end.

Jack Thorne took them to an hotel—he had something to tell the poor little trembling woman before him—and it frightened him to realise that there was little time to lose.

But he was wise to let the first train depart without them, and he took them to a private room, and set before them steaming coffee and bread and butter, and even an omelette. In their inexperience, they had travelled far and had very little to eat, so that the food acted like magic upon their strength. Their spirits rose, and when the wild-rose tints returned to Cristina's little pale face, and her great dark eyes looked up at him with returning light in their depths, Jack Thorne realised how lovely the sculptor's wife was, and the dread of what he had to say increased.

"How can we thank you?" said Cristina, leaning back restfully. "But we give you so much trouble, I am ashamed. But, oh, you

will never know what it was to us to hear our own Italian on this desolate shore!"

Jack tried to smile.

"I wish to do all I can to help you, not only, Signora, for Donna Gemma's sake, but because I know your husband and admire him."

"Ah! Can you tell me about him?"

Cristina stopped. She thought English manners very rude, for Jack had turned away abruptly and walked to the window.

"Shall we get ready to continue our journey, Signora?" said Nanna tremulously. Something she had seen in Jack's face had startled her.

Cristina fastened on her hat, winding the long gauzy white veil round her throat.

"May I ask what time the train to London leaves, Signore?" she said.

Jack came back to the table. He was pale.

"You began to ask me something," he said gently. "Let me do what I can for you."

"It is this," said Cristina, twisting her hands nervously. "I have not got my husband's address."

"I know," he said encouragingly.

"Donna Gemma had heard from you—you mentioned him in your letter. I wanted to ask you how I can find him?"

"I can tell you where he is," said Jack. "I was with him yesterday."

"Ah, God be thanked."

Cristina covered her face with her hands; then suddenly throwing her arms round Nanna, she clung to her. Nanna's frightened eyes were fixed on Jack's face, trying to read what was written there.

Cristina was wild with delight. "We shall see him!" she cried. "Our troubles are over. Tell me, Signore, where is he? When shall we start? Oh, do not let us delay. Does he know that I am coming?"

"The next train will leave in ten minutes," said Jack. "We must start for the station. We have a rather long journey before us. He is not in London——"

"Not in London? But where then? Shall I not see him to-day? I shall die if I may not see him at once. Think, Signore!" she exclaimed. "Think! it is three years since I last saw him, and then I displeased him! And all this time my heart has cried out for him. I have longed and pined. And now I am in England, and I shall see him to-day. *Madonna Santa!* I am too happy!"

"La Signora must start for the station," said Nanna quickly. "We must not be too late."

"Yes, yes," said Jack feverishly. "Let us go. We shall have to cross London, dear Signora, and take a train from another station, and it is about two hours' journey down to Landbury."

"To Landbury? Is Giglio there? Only two hours?"

"Giglio is there," said Jack. "He is there, indeed. He is at a house in the country that he has taken."

"Ah! But he knows, then, that I am coming to him? Yes?"

"Yes, he knows."

"But he is not angry with me now? Not now, my kind friend?"

"No, he is not angry now," said Jack. He was leading her rapidly through the vestibule of the hotel out to the station. He left them for one moment in the compartment while he went for their luggage. Cristina caught hold of Nanna's hand.

"You are so silent, Nanna. What is it? Why do you look so grave? Can you not sympathise when I am wild with joy? Nanna, it is so long since he went away. A few hours only and I shall see my Giglio."

"I am grave because I fear," said Nanna. "Something in the English Signore's face frightens me."

"Ah, bah! That comes of an idle imagination. He is an Englishman; they never smile even when they bring good news. Signore!" she exclaimed, as Jack returned. "You say it is all right? There is nothing the matter, is there? Giglio is not angry with me at all now? Nanna yonder will have it that you look sad, but you are always sad in England. I tell her it is too silly." And she laughed.

The train moved out of the station. Jack spoke gently.

"Two or three years bring changes, Signora. You will find Giglio changed."

She started, then laughed again.

"Oh, yes, yes! He is three years older. Perhaps a grey hair or two. Donna Gemma used to say that three years was nothing, but they seem a century. But at twenty-six, can he have changed so much?"

"Giglio is not well."

"Not well? Poveretto! It is this terrible climate. He must come home. Who could be well here? I am cold as ice. You yourself do not look well."

"He has fever."

"Ah, a little fever. That is nothing. I hope they have bled him. He used to be feverish sometimes in the great heat."

Jack said no more. She was in too strained a condition to bear it, and it frightened him.

At the London terminus he was able to speak a few words apart to Nanna, to answer the unspoken question in her anxious eyes.

"It is a fatal illness. There is no hope; he is dying. She will see him only to say farewell."

"Tell her no more at present," said Nanna. "Leave her to me."

Nanna saw through Cristina's excited chatter the wild light of suspicion shining in her eyes, and her heart told her that the work of preparation for what must be was already done.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Jack Thorne had received Dr. Curtis's telegram he acted as if Giglio Santeodoro had been his brother or dearest friend instead of a mere acquaintance. On his own responsibility he hired a good nurse and arranged with a kindly Italian priest to accompany him to Landbury at once.

The arrival of the nurse gave the greatest possible relief to the young doctor, for since the discovery of Gian's disobedience he had not dared to lose sight of his patient.

Giglio's condition was so grave that that night when consciousness returned he summoned the priest, believing that his last hour was at hand. But life is strong and tough in a man of Giglio's age, and morning found him apparently better, the terrible temperature lower, the oppressed breathing easier.

That day Jack received Donna Gemma's letter forwarded from his London rooms. There had been some delay in its delivery, and he found that he must start at once to meet the forlorn young wife when she landed at Folkestone. But before his departure he must tell Giglio. He asked Dr. Curtis's permission to do so, and he nodded assent, only saying very sorrowfully, "Nothing can hurt him now."

Then Jack knelt beside Giglio's bed and took his hand, saying very gently in Italian :

"My friend, I am going to fetch your wife. She is on her way to see you."

"Ah!" said Giglio in his toneless whisper. "Will she be in time? Jack, listen to me."

His voice became inaudible. Jack bent lower.

"Dear fellow," he said, "can I do anything for you?"

"Yes; listen! I have confessed, and the Padre gives me hope—hope in the infinite mercy." There was a pause, then he whispered very low, "Jack, you were right."

"I knew I was right," said Jack softly. "My poor, poor fellow! Why did you do it?"

"For her."

"Ah, the old story. The daughters of Eve are cruel as death."

"Enough talking," said Dr. Curtis, coming forward with a cordial to the bedside.

Giglio swallowed with increasing difficulty, but there was a new expression on his face—a strange reposed look. All pain had left him now, his breathing grew fainter and faster.

The afternoon hours passed slowly and heavily. Dr. Curtis looked at his watch over and over again. Gian crept in and knelt by his master's side, holding his hand. The forlorn expression on the face of the lonely Italian was hopeless.

It gradually became dusk, and the shadows gathered round the pillow on which the beautiful dark head lay.

Dr. Curtis went restlessly in and out. There was a hardly suppressed sob in his throat, he had fought so hard for this young life, but in his regret he was too generous to harbour bitterness against that pathetic uncouth figure crouching by the bed who had undone his work.

Over and over again imagination made the watchers hear a carriage drive up to the door, but a glance at watch or clock dispelled the illusion. The priest came softly in and knelt down, and the hours crept on.

CHAPTER XII.

"OH, make him go faster! His horses creep. We shall never be there!" cried Cristina.

But the horses were doing their best, and urged by promises of large reward, the driver drove fast; but eight miles stretched before him, and the roads were heavy with mud and rain.

"Oh, faster!" she entreated. "I know that Giglio has only a little fever, but if it were you, Signore, who had been three years divided from the light of your eyes, you also would feel a little terror, some natural fears," and she laughed.

Jack did not speak. Nanna held Cristina's hand fast, and they drove on.

"If Giglio is asleep, this noise will awake him!" exclaimed Cristina, as the lumbering fly drew up, crunching the wet gravel, before the door.

Jack sprang out. The hall door was thrown open, and someone stood there in the lamplight.

It was Dr. Curtis. He came forward and helped the two trembling women to get out of the carriage without speaking, and drew them into the house.

"He is also one of these strange English," cried Cristina, "who never speak and do not smile! Look, look at his face!" she caught Nanna's hand.

"For the love of Heaven, Signore," exclaimed Nanna, "tell us the truth."

Dr. Curtis looked at them despairingly. He could not speak their language. He said a few words rapidly to Jack, and then he opened the door of the studio and led them in. Cristina uttered a cry when she saw where she was.

"Ah, now I begin to believe it all!" she exclaimed in a kind of ecstasy. "He is a great sculptor, he is famous. His words have come true! All Europe rings with his fame!"

Two figures came forward from the shadows—one was the calm

Italian priest, the other was Gian—Gian worn, exhausted and unkempt, with dazed eyes which saw nothing.

The priest came up to Cristina and took both her hands. The look of his steady eyes seemed to mesmerize her.

"Signora," he said, "Giglio was tired, tired out, for he has suffered very long. He had sinned and repented, and the Angel of Peace pressed on his eyes. They closed, and he sleeps."

"He sleeps?" said Cristina in a strange low voice.

"He sleeps on earth. Listen, my child. He was tired, and the Angels have rocked him to sleep, and have taken his worn-out soul home."

"Take me to him, father," she whispered. "Take me to Giglio. He is not angry now."

He led her through the hall and up the wide staircase, Nanna following her closely, while the two men remained together listening with white faces.

Giglio's still form was lying in that deep sleep which shall never wake again till the last day come, and the secrets of all men shall be revealed.

Cristina stood beside him.

"Giglio," she whispered. "Giglio."

But no shadow of life passed over the glorious beauty of that dead face.

Again she spoke "Giglio."

Then the truth burst on her dazed brain, and through the great empty house rang her wild agonising cry. She was too late.

* * * * *

The terrible days that follow the final departure of the soul to its immortal home had dragged out their long, weary hours, and Giglio Santeodoro was laid to rest in the dreary little churchyard at Landbury within sound of the restless sea. He lay with all his powers cut short, his sins forgiven, and his broken heart at rest. In his short life he had suffered bitterly.

Cristina went home after a while, back to the loving arms of her mother-like friend, and Nanna went with her. She was glad, with the want of imagination of her peasant birth, to escape out of the tragedy of life into the commonplace once more.

After a time Nanna married Nino. Gian Martino had passed utterly out of her life. He was no longer the same man whom she had once looked upon as her *promesso*. He had gone out into the wide world, and he could never come back again, and a great future lay before him.

No one ever knew Giglio Santeodoro's secret except those three—the priest, his faithful Gian, and Jack Thorne.

THE END.

A MOTHER UPON THE THRONE.

A SKETCH FROM THE LIFE OF THE EMPRESS MARIA THERESA.

THE advocates of the political emancipation of women could scarcely find a stronger argument in their favour than the life of the great German princess, who, for more than forty years of the last century, sat upon the imperial throne of Austria. The renowned historian of Frederick the Great has pronounced her "a woman worthy to be a man;" and numerous facts gathered from her memoirs and private letters may be induced to show that incomparable though she was as a sovereign, she was no less excellent as a wife and mother.

Maria Theresa was only eighteen years of age when her father, Charles VI., the last of the Hapsburgs, introduced her into the councils of the State. Five years later she ascended the throne. The history of her time shows with what wisdom and energy she solved the most difficult political problems, with what unfaltering courage, from the beginning of her reign, she conducted the struggles of her government with opposing powers, and how, in spite of the loss of Silesia, she left the empire greater than she found it.

With a full sense of her responsibility and a rare conscientiousness, she devoted herself to the discharge of the duties of that high office entrusted to her by God. One acquainted with the horribly prolix and involved style of the official writings of her day, can but admire the patience with which she examined all the State documents. Upon these she was wont to make marginal notes, which were sure to be apt, practical, and sensible. Often she would be busied with the reading of these official papers until far into the night, and early morning would find her again at her task.

She rarely absented herself from the councils of State, and in all weighty matters took the lead. She was concerned in all matters for the public good, and interested herself in the building of bridges and the projecting of roads. Nothing was beneath her attention, and every officer of her realm, the lowest as well as the highest, was sure of a respectful hearing. And still she was so thoroughly womanly in all she did, that Adam Wolf certainly did not err when he said of her—"In the historical reminiscences of this noblest of women, we are struck no less by the tenderness and amiability of her nature, than by the greatness of her mind, and the versatility and freshness of her genius."

She was the undoubted intellectual superior of her husband, Francis Stephen von Lothringen, and, as he had no leaning towards affairs of State, she found in him little support or aid. Francis I.

was only nominally co-ruler with his wife. Though her love had invested him with the title of Emperor of Germany, he had really little to say or to do in the government. He was only a private citizen, the business man of the Empress, and yet a skilful financier, who, though noted for his economy, had still a warm heart for the poor. When not busied in his favourite studies of alchemy and natural science, he worked diligently for the elevation of the labouring classes.

In spite of its mental incongruity, this thirty years' marriage, which had been founded upon real affection, was an exceedingly happy one. The Empress gave every proof of the most devoted attachment to her husband; she never liked to appear in public without him; his picture was always taken with her own, and her favourite presents were little statues representing herself and the Emperor on horseback. Left for fifteen years a widow, she mourned him to the day of her death. Soon after his death she wrote to the Countess Harrack—"I have lost in him the gentle friend of my childhood, the dear companion of a thirty years' marriage, the joy of my life. He soothed my cares and sorrows while he shared them."

In order to fully understand the character of this remarkable woman, we must know her as a mother. No less than sixteen children, six sons and ten daughters, claimed her maternal love and care. Ten of these grew to manhood or womanhood and survived her, six died in infancy and early youth.

In the training of her children, Maria Theresa showed the same ardour and devotion as in the conduct of the affairs of State. The imperial family led a simple, old-fashioned German life. The Empress looked after the education of her children with the most exemplary care and attention. She closely watched their manners and habits, arranged the order of their daily studies, an hour being devoted to each lesson, and gave them prayers and hymns to learn by heart. She exacted the strictest obedience, and never failed to punish disobedience. For some boyish transgression, she once forbade her favourite son, the Archduke Charles, who died at the age of sixteen, to celebrate his birthday in the usual manner.

In her instructions to the head governess of the Archduchess Josepha, she counselled her especially to see that the archduchess was kind and considerate to the servants. The education of her first-born son, Joseph, was conducted with the greatest strictness and severity; and if, in the training of this son, we detect many faults, we know that at the bottom of them all was a warm, true mother-heart, an earnest desire to form in him a strong, moral and efficient character, worthy to succeed to the imperial throne.

At the marriage of her children, the Empress showed her motherly prudence no less than her motherly love. That she always remained the judicious friend and adviser of her married children, numerous letters still in existence prove.

The happiest and most unconstrained relations existed between the members of the imperial family, whose soul was always the mother. Schönbrunn was a favourite residence, but the best loved place of all was Laxenburg. The united efforts of the Empress and her husband had made of Schönbrunn a charming and magnificent country residence. While Maria Theresa's work had been the restoration and rebuilding of the ruined old castle, the garden was wholly the creation of Francis, and of it he was very proud, delighting in nothing more than its exhibition to strangers. Admission was free to all, and, at the Empress's command, a building near by was set apart as a place of refreshment for guests.

Maria Theresa, while at Schönbrunn, did not neglect the business of the State. She was often seen sitting under the shade of the trees, writing at a table covered with papers. And yet the court ceremonials were far less strictly observed here than at Vienna. In these beautiful gardens many a joyful family feast was celebrated. And when on Sundays the Empress went to church, the always cheerful Emperor at her side, and behind their parents the large, blooming band of children, who could be happier than that rich and proud *mother*, who was a pattern to every mother of her great realm?

Until the death of her husband, Maria Theresa spent several weeks of every year at Laxenburg, the summer residence of the Hapsburgs from ancient times. This was a place full of historical remembrances, delightfully situated in the midst of a broad plain near Vienna. In this not very roomy castle reigned a freedom and happiness not known elsewhere, and here only the most intimate friends were invited.

With all her simplicity, Maria Theresa was by no means indifferent to the toilet, which was duly regulated for these sojourns in the country. From the year 1758, the ladies who appeared at Laxenburg wore red robes or sacks, embroidered with gold or silver and edged with blonde. The gentlemen wore red coats and green vests bordered with gold. The usual pictures of Maria Theresa, representing her in advanced life, and clad in mourning garments, give but a slight idea of what she was when in her prime. She formed the centre of her own charming family circle, and of the Austrian court. Surpassing most of her sex in height, she still possessed a finely proportioned figure, which remained stately and erect even to old age. Her hair was rich and abundant, and of a blonde colour, her eyes were clear gray, and her mouth finely cut. Late in life, a fall from a coach, and especially the small-pox, made sad inroads into her beauty, and in age her features became fixed, compressed, and almost masculine, her once light figure heavy and unwieldy.

In the full bloom of her youthful beauty, this imperial lady was once walking through the garden of her summer residence. A white robe of silver brocade, with a blue silk body, fell in graceful folds from her stately figure. Diamonds glittered in her rich dress and in

her powdered hair, and pearls adorned her neck and arms. As she descended the wide stone steps, overshadowed by dense foliage, she saw, sitting upon a stone bench, and leaning her head against a cold hard pillar, a poor woman, so worn out with sorrow, pain and wretchedness, that she had fallen asleep. In her lap was an infant, which in vain looked up into the face of its unconscious mother, and moaned and sobbed from hunger. Maria Theresa, who had a child of the same age, was deeply moved by this sight. Without a moment's hesitation, she took the child from its slumbering mother, and nourished it at her own breast, gazing, meanwhile, with the most lively satisfaction at the poor, famished, but now happy little being. A rising young artist of Munich has made this incident the subject of a picture, in the foreground of which we see the stately and beautiful Empress with the infant in her arms, and near her the still sleeping, unconscious mother. In the background stands a nurse, with little Joseph, the heir of the empire, in her arms, by the horrified expression of her countenance only too plainly showing her opinion of this strange proceeding on the part of the august Empress, Maria Theresa.

The Empress often broke through all the forms of royal etiquette, and followed the impulse of the moment. During her coronation at Pressburg, in 1741, finding the crown oppressive, she coolly took it off and laid it upon a table before her. At the Emperor's coronation, in 1745, in the most unconstrained manner, she joined the people in their cry, "*Vivat Kaiseo Franz!*" and laughed heartily as her husband, with his long gloves and coronation ornaments, passed by. In 1768, in advanced age, she came one evening into her box in the Citizens' Theatre, and cried joyfully down into the parterre, "Leopold (her son) has a little boy!"

Her heart beat for her people, and she was unwearied in efforts for their good. Through her exertions, the miseries of bondage were mitigated, and the lot of the peasants was improved. She abolished the trials for witchcraft, and the torture. She shared the joys and sorrows of the humblest of her subjects, visited the sick and the aged poor in their homes, and the lowliest could gain from her a hearing, assured of the success of every reasonable petition which it was in her power to grant. Her visit to the Citizens' Theatre just referred to, shows that she wished her people to share in her own joy.

The spotless purity of her private character was a shining example to all her subjects, her happy domestic life a pattern for every household in her empire. Most justly may we call her the mother of her country and people—a mother upon the throne.

Great as she was as Empress, Maria Theresa was greater still as a woman. This, her most beautiful renown, all women would do well to imitate, and meanwhile—leave politics to the care of men.

HIS SOUL'S AFFINITY.

I.

"And in the afternoon they came unto a land
Wherein it seemed always afternoon."—*Tennyson*.

"DON'T you think the lotus-eaters must have got awfully bored with its being always afternoon?"

Mrs. Seymour cast a swift, slightly astonished glance at the individual who had put this question to her. Surely, she reflected, it was a somewhat unusual remark with which to begin a conversation with a total stranger at a *table-d'hôte*.

"I think it highly probable," she said, with a little chill in her voice, and then turned to address her neighbour on the other side.

Bruce Langdale smiled to himself under his tawny moustache. This was the first direct snub he had ever received from a woman, and just by way of contrast it was a distinctly refreshing experience. He prided himself upon his originality in words and actions, and was won't to observe that the stepping stones traversed by ordinary people before embarking on the sea of intimacy, ought to be abolished, and especially so in the case of meeting a kindred soul.

In the slight, graceful woman who sat beside him, whose head was poised so proudly on her shoulders, and whose faint, fleeting smile was a thing to be looked for, he had immediately discovered an "affinity," but the strange part of the affair was that she herself did not seem to recognise the fact. For a whole week, ever since his arrival in the fair Island of Capri, he had been on the look-out for some congenial spirit with whom he could sentimentalise on the scenery and the natives, but his fellow feeders were, so he decided at the first glimpse of them, utterly unavailable for that purpose.

There was a buxom British matron with three daughters exactly facing him. The mother, with a bland, pompous manner and an unmistakable *toupet*, and the girls, big, athletic-looking young women with rosy cheeks, enormous appetites, and hands and feet to match. A Russian bride, a little further down the table, *looked* interesting, but was jealously guarded by a dapper little husband who monopolised her entire attention; and the remainder of the company consisted of a red-haired, florid English widow, several uninteresting German Fraus with their respective spouses, and three or four men of various nationalities, whose acquaintance he felt not the slightest desire to cultivate.

His new neighbour, however, who had only made her appearance the day before, was of a very different type. Her name was Mrs.

Seymour, that he had ascertained from the inspection of the visitors' list, and she was travelling with a Mrs. Blair, but whether she was wife or widow was a problem yet to be solved. Meanwhile, she was eminently good to look at, and he had every expectation that when she had fully realised his many attractions, she would meet him half way in the manner he had always been accustomed to where her sex was concerned.

Bruce Langdale held a distinctly high opinion of himself. The heir presumptive to an earldom, the owner of a lovely old place in the smiling Devonshire valleys, and decidedly good-looking, he had been more or less spoilt by women ever since his nursery days, and his flirtations, as one of his chums remarked, were as "numberless as the sands of the sea-shore."

Unencumbered by any profession, he led a somewhat desultory existence; yachting on summer seas, fishing in Norway, tiger-shooting in India, skating at St. Petersburg, or lounging in London boudoirs, just as the spirit moved him; and so far he had found the world a very pleasant place of residence. How he had contrived to escape the matrimonial noose, was a conundrum concerning which Society searched in vain for the word of the enigma. Mothers of marriageable daughters had showered invitations upon him by the score; the most luxurious room in the bachelor's quarters of country houses was reserved for his special use; pretty girls and plain girls blushed and lowered their eyelids at his approach, and would cheerfully have given him every dance on their programmes, if he had expressed any desire for such a boon; and he was generally fêted and caressed by women of all ages. Yet so far no Mrs. Langdale had appeared above the social horizon.

It was partly to avoid the manœuvres of Belgravian mothers, and partly also to live up to his rôle of originality, that he had left town just as the season was beginning, and started off for lovely Capri, the "Island of the Blest," in order to taste the sweetness of the Italian spring-time.

At the end of a week, however, its delights began to pall upon him, and he was just thinking about taking his departure, when Mrs. Seymour made her appearance on the scene, thereby introducing an element of excitement and novelty.

"Perhaps she is shy," he mused, as his neighbour still continued to converse with a substantial German matron and vouchsafed him no opportunity of again addressing her. "She doesn't look it, though; but if not, why the deuce can't she let me talk to her? I don't look disreputable!"

The usual monotonous courses of a *table-d'hôte* followed each other in due succession, and the room began to grow overpoweringly warm.

"Would you not like that window opened?" asked Bruce politely as Mrs. Seymour, moving away a steaming *entrée*, leant back in her chair and unfurled a dainty little spangled fan.

"Thanks, I should," was the frigid reply.

"By Jove," he thought, as he beckoned to a waiter, "she is the only bit of coolness in the atmosphere. What *can* be the matter with her?"

All ideas of leaving Capri, as he had intended doing on the following morning, had vanished. Here was a novelty in his existence at last; a pretty woman, evidently of his own world, who took not the smallest notice of him; and he determined to stay and see it out.

Before the protracted dinner had come to an end his neighbour rose from her seat, and with a little comprehensive bow to the company in general, walked gracefully down the long room, the eyes of every man and woman present following her movements.

"Awfully well her gown fits," reflected Bruce Langdale approvingly. He was an authority on "chiffons." "Carries herself well too, and her hair is quite up to date."

Meanwhile the object of his admiration had reached the cheerful sitting-room upstairs where her friend had secluded herself on the plea of a headache.

Hester Blair was a tall, handsome woman of the brunette type, who carried her forty years as lightly as if they had been half the number. As a fellow-traveller she was perfection, so Violet Seymour was wont to affirm, and the two were eminently sympathetic to one another.

"What an age you have been, Vi!" was the elder woman's greeting as the latter entered the room and threw herself into a lounging-chair with a sigh of relief.

"You are an old fraud, Hettie!" she exclaimed. "I do not believe you have the ghost of a headache; you look blooming. And"—with a little laugh—"you ought to have been downstairs chaperoning me. A *man* spoke to me!"

"What sort of a man?" inquired Mrs. Blair in an interested tone of voice. "As far as that goes, though, you are quite capable of looking after yourself. But was he anything out of the common?"

"He was awfully good-looking," replied Violet meditatively; "and he seemed all right; but there was a Grand-Turk-throw-the-handkerchief air about him which riled me, so I was as demure and proper as any British matron could possibly be."

"Yes, you can be when you like," said her friend with an amused laugh and an admiring glance at the piquant face beside her. "You would deceive even the elect. And how did he like it?"

"He did not like it at all," she answered saucily. "I should imagine it was the first time he had come across a woman who showed no desire to talk to him. He puzzled his head over it for at least three courses. I could see him at it perfectly, though I was conversing amiably with a fat Frau on my other side."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Hester piously. "What an ordeal! What could you have found to talk to her about? I think I should have preferred the *man*, whatever he was like."

"I do not doubt you, my dear; but then, in a quiet way, you are one of the greatest flirts I know. Now I"—drawing herself up with a little air of dignity—"am perfectly at home in the society of my own sex. Talk to her about, did you say? Oh, I asked her what darning-cotton they used in Germany, and how 'Apfelkucken' was made, and told her how much meat was a pound in England, and—all that sort of thing, don't you know."

"Good heavens!" repeated Mrs. Blair. "Where are you off to now, child?" she added, as Violet suddenly rose from her chair and went towards the door.

"I am going to look in the list downstairs and see who that man is."

"But, my dear, you *can't*," was Mrs. Blair's horrified rejoinder. "Suppose anyone saw you."

"Well, why not?" with a little toss of her dainty head. "I don't object to being seen."

And before any further expostulations could reach her she was running down the broad staircase which led to the entrance hall. Not a soul was in sight, so far as she could see, so walking boldly up to the list she began a careful examination of the names inscribed thereon.

"'Brown, Liverpool; Thomas, Birmingham; Segrave, London.' No, he is not one of those, I am sure, and there are no other Englishmen. Oh, yes, here he is—Langdale, Bruce Langdale. Why, *that* is the man." And she paused suddenly, her lips parted, and her cheeks flushed with excitement, while at this moment the owner of the name emerged from behind a pillar and confronted her, an unlighted cigarette in his hand. He gave a mere assumed start as his eyes fell on his late neighbour at the *table-d'hôte*.

"Can I be of any use to you?" he asked politely. "Fetch a waiter or anything of that sort?"

"No, thanks," she murmured hurriedly, and then with a slight bow she turned away from him and began to reascend the stairs.

"It is beginning," reflected Bruce Langdale, as he crossed over to an adjacent mirror and gazed complacently at his handsome face and tall, well set up figure. "She came down to see who I was, I will lay a fiver; she looked thoroughly 'caught' when I appeared on the scene." And he went off with that air of complacency, which on occasions like these adds several inches to masculine stature, to smoke his cigarette in the moonlight.

Mrs. Seymour re-entered the sitting-room in a slightly flurried manner, something akin to that of a naughty child who has been detected in the act of stealing jam.

"Hettie!" she exclaimed dramatically, seizing her friend by the arm and gently shaking her to and fro—"Do you know who he is?"

"Haven't the slightest idea. Some old flame of yours? You

look—anyhow—” failing signally in the attempt to describe the other’s appearance in appropriate language.

“Do you remember the man who behaved so shamefully to poor little Cissy Travers? Followed her like a shadow all through her first season, kept other men off, and made everyone think he was going to marry her, and then, one fine morning sailed away in his yacht to the Canary Islands leaving her *planté là?*”

“Why, yes,” said Mrs. Blair with growing excitement. “Bruce Langdale! Do you mean to say he is here?”

“Bruce Langdale himself in this very hotel. And oh, Hettie”—with a sudden gleam of mischief in her eyes—“you will scold me awfully, but—but he *saw* me!”

“Saw you looking at his name?” cried Mrs. Blair. “*What* a situation! We must remain secluded here till he goes.”

“Pooh! Nonsense!” said Mrs. Seymour airily. “*I* am not going to seclude myself; on the contrary I am going to shine in a new *role*. Listen to me, Hettie,” she continued impressively; “I am going to pay that man out.”

“But how can you?” asked her friend with a bewildered expression.

“Why, by leading him on, fooling him to the top of his bent, and that will not be a difficult task, and then when he is bridled and saddled I shall throw off the mask and tell him that I am Cissy Travers’s greatest friend.”

Mrs. Blair looked dubious. “I don’t like it,” she said. “It is a risky game. I have seen it often played before. Besides”—hopefully—“what will Frank say?”

“Frank will say exactly what I say. I shall write to him by this mail and tell him what I am going to do. He will thoroughly approve, I tell you. He cannot bear a man flirt, and if I can teach this particular one a lesson, I shall be conferring a lasting benefit on my sex. That shall be my Mission, with a capital M—I have long been looking for one. Oh, by the way, Hettie,” putting a caressing arm round her still disapproving friend, “you will let him think me a genuine widow, not a ‘grass’ one, won’t you? You won’t spoil it all by giving me away?” she added coaxingly.

“You are a born wheedler, child, and I suppose you must have your own way as usual, but I insist on your telling Frank. You won’t be able to wait for his answer, I suppose, but if he objects you must stop it. *I* can’t prevent you, but I tell you flatly I think it is an insane scheme, and no good can possibly come of it.”

“Wait and see,” said Violet, “and I will write a budget to Frank this moment.”

And with that promptness which invariably characterised her every action, Mrs. Seymour sat down at the writing-table and began a letter to her husband, whose regiment, the 5th Lancers, was then stationed at Bangalore.

II.

"THIS certainly is the land of afternoons!" said Mrs. Seymour, as she lounged luxuriously in a low chair in a shady corner of the hotel garden.

"Yes," replied her companion, from his reclining position on the grass at her feet, "but I have changed my mind concerning the lotus-eaters' boredom. Given certain circumstances I can imagine them having a distinctly good time."

Violet raised her pencilled eye-brows with a slightly supercilious air.

"Can you?" she said. "I am afraid you are rather fickle in your opinions."

"Now and then in my opinions, perhaps," he answered, "but"—tenderly—"never where my affections are concerned."

A week had elapsed since Mrs. Seymour had announced her intention of shining in a "new rôle," and, to all appearances, her efforts were about to be crowned with success. The "stepping stones," disapproved of by Bruce Langdale, had in this case been entirely dispensed with, and he was now on terms of friendly intimacy with the woman who had snubbed him so persistently on their first meeting. She did so now occasionally, for the matter of that, and perhaps in this fact lay the reason of her charm for him, for usually with Bruce Langdale the attainment of his end spelt weariness.

It had been Mrs. Blair to whom he had addressed himself on her first appearance at luncheon, and she, impelled thereto by a violent nudge from Violet's elbow, had received his advances with graciousness. The discovery of various mutual acquaintances having served to break the ice, he had offered to accompany the two ladies to the Blue Grotto on the following morning, and since then the trio had made several excursions together.

"If one did not know what a wretch the man was, one might be inclined to think him distinctly pleasant," remarked Mrs. Blair; but Violet reserved her opinion. She acted her self-imposed rôle to perfection, being a past mistress in the art of flirtation, and gauging correctly the temperament of the man she had to deal with. She made him feel, even while she led him on, that with her it was a case of "Thus far shalt thou go and no further."

"How you snubbed me that first evening," he said presently. "What did you do it for, I wonder?"

An amused gleam shone for an instant in Violet Seymour's grey eyes.

"I am not in the habit of making myself agreeable to every stray man I meet at a *table-d'hôte*," she said demurely.

"Am I a stray man?" in a highly aggrieved tone. It was an appellation to which he was not accustomed.

"Well, you might have been for all I knew. Of course you looked all right, but one never knows." Then with a little laugh: "You have not often been snubbed, I suppose, as it made such an impression on you?"

Bruce Langdale looked at her wonderingly. How was it she had not grasped the kind of fellow he was? They had friends in common, was it possible that she had never heard of his triumphal progress where the fair sex was concerned? And how was it also that his good looks and various fascinations had not impressed her in the same manner that they did nine women out of ten? This bade fair to be one of the most exciting episodes of his existence. And what a pretty picture she made in her white crepon gown, with a cluster of crimson roses in her silver belt!

"It depends upon who snubs one," he said slowly. "If it had not been you it would probably have made no impression."

"Oh, why do you dot your i's so?" said Violet impatiently. "The insinuation was quite evident without the other sentence tacked on. But that is the way with men; when by some happy accident they succeed in making an effective speech, they invariably spoil it by parsing it as if it were a phrase in a grammar book."

The amazed listener rose to his feet and produced his cigarette case.

"May I smoke?" he asked, feeling the need of a nerve restorative—he, who prided himself on his delicately veiled compliments, to be told that he dotted his i's! Surely this woman was an anomaly of nature, and yet what a charm there was about her piquant face and plaintive low-pitched voice.

"How long have you and Mrs. Blair been going about together?" he inquired presently.

"Oh, some months. We have had a awfully good time, we wintered in Rome, spent a week or so in dear little Florence, and then came down to Naples. She is an ideal companion; we have been chums for ages; ever since——" Here she broke off abruptly and lowered her eyes.

"Since her husband died I suppose she means," reflected Bruce. "But it can't be 'ages' since that event; she can't be more than three or four and twenty now."

"And before you set out on your travels," he asked in a tone of sympathetic interest, "were you living alone? You see,"—apologetically—"everything that concerns my 'friend,' is intensely interesting to me, and we agreed to dispense with stepping stones, did we not?"

The "affinity" question had by this time been discussed between them in all its bearings.

"Oh, quite so," she said, "I do not mind your asking at all." And to herself she added: "Wants to find out about the dear departed."

"I was at home before Hester and I came abroad."

"Oh, I see; very nice for you."

"With her own people," he mused, little imagining that in this case "at home" meant a charmingly furnished house in an old cathedral city shared with Major Seymour of the 5th Lancers. "Of course," he went on, "you are too young to live alone, and I cannot fancy you with a grim duenna. What a blessing it is you have your own people at hand." Then with a caressing intonation in his voice: "Tell me, is the wound too fresh or may I mention the subject? Is it long since—since your husband left you?"

There was a little pause while Violet gazed dreamily across the sparkling waters of the blue Mediterranean, a pensive gravity in her eyes and an inward feeling of irrepressible amusement. "What a mercy he worded it like that," she thought to herself. "I am such a bad hand at telling an out and out tarradiddle gracefully."

"It is nearly two years now since he *left* me," she faltered.

"So short a time?" he murmured sympathetically. "She is not heartbroken," he reflected. "I expect he was some rich old beggar she did not care two straws about."

And then he dismissed all further thought of Mrs. Seymour's husband and embarked upon what he called a "soulful discussion," which lasted until they were summoned to luncheon.

"It works splendidly, Hettie," said Mrs. Seymour that evening, when the two friends sat watching the moon-kissed sea from the balcony of their sitting-room. "If poor little Cissy had only known how to manage a man of this description, smile on him one moment, and freeze him the next, never let him know where he is, in fact, she would have been Mrs. Langdale by now. To be sure, she was only seventeen, poor child, and *very* young for that."

"The existence of the future Mrs. Langdale, whoever she may be, will not be one of unmixed bliss," remarked Hester. "That man will flirt in his coffin; or, at any rate, he will always go in for 'soul affinities,' which is quite the same thing and rather more dangerous. Cissy is well out of it."

"Oh, very likely; but after all, Hettie, it is not what will prove satisfactory in the long run that one wishes for; it is just what one *wants* at the moment," with a little sigh.

"And what do *you* want?" asked her friend with a smile. "A certain dark-eyed Major, who is cursing his fate at being condemned to stay in a climate which the doctor has pronounced bad for his little wife, is that it?"

Violet Seymour rose from her chair and leaned her arms upon the iron ledge of the little balcony, her eyes fixed upon the white roofs of "noisy Naples" across the bay silvered by the moonlight into a city of enchantment.

"Yes, that is it," she said. "And the sight of every other man one comes across makes it worse. They are all so commonplace after him."

"I wish Bruce Langdale could hear you!" exclaimed Mrs. Blair, with an irrepressible little laugh. "I should like him to know that there is at least one woman who considers his irresistible self commonplace."

"He would never believe it," returned Violet. "The vanity of man is an immeasurable quantity. Besides," mockingly, "I am his 'soul's affinity,' don't you know?"

"How long is this comedy going to run?" asked Mrs. Blair.

"It must come to an end soon, I suppose, because we shall be moving on to Amalfi in about ten days, sha'n't we?"

"And he, when does he go?"

"Oh, not before then, you may be sure," was the confident reply.

"Did I not tell you, Hettie, that I had *succeeded*?"

"Well, for my part," said Mrs. Blair, "I do not consider the game worth the candle, and it will not cure the man a bit. Even you, child, cannot reform people's little vices in a week or so. He may fall in love with you, he probably has done so, but that will not improve his moral character, and will possibly cause him a good many bad quarters of an hour, poor fellow."

"You are growing positively sentimental over him, Hettie. He deserves to have bad quarters of an hour after what he made Cissy suffer. She has never been the same girl since. It is his vanity which will be hurt, not his heart; but even if it were the latter, a genuine affection, if the creature is capable of such a thing, which I doubt, will do him all the good in the world."

"Possibly, if it could be returned," said Hester. "A wife attractive enough to *retain* his love would be the making of him, but a *tendresse* for a married woman will do him more harm than good."

"Time will show," returned Violet in an oracular fashion. "Do you know that it is going on for the 'small hours,' Hettie? I am off to my virtuous slumbers."

And with a light kiss on her friend's cheek she disappeared into the adjoining room.

"She is all right," mused Mrs. Blair. "Frank Seymour need not be jealous of any man living even if he were an Adonis and an Admirable Crichton combined; but she is playing a risky game, and I hope no harm will come of it. Anyhow, she cannot say I did not warn her."

And with this consolatory reflection she followed her friend's example and retired into her bedroom.

III.

It was three days later, and Mrs. Blair was walking up and down in the hotel gardens with an expression of doubt and perplexity on her handsome face. Bruce Langdale and his "Soul's Affinity" had

gone off for a row, and although it was her usual custom to play propriety on these occasions, she had for once "struck work," and flatly refused to accompany them.

"What a complication!" she murmured to herself, as she read for the third time a telegram which had arrived for her within the last half-hour. "From Major Seymour, 5th Lancers, Portsmouth, to Mrs. Blair, Hotel Quisisana, Capri.—Home on leave. Don't on any account tell V. Want to surprise her. Am joining you at Capri."

"And that is what he will find," reflected Mrs. Blair, with a distracted glance in the direction of a little boat gliding peacefully over the tideless sea. "Of course he never got Violet's last letter, telling him of this hair-brained scheme of hers, and he will arrive just in time for the *dénouement*. Bruce Langdale is pretty sure to make a fool of himself sooner or later. I can only trust he is doing it now, and in that case he will probably efface himself before Frank's appearance on the scene."

Her hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment. The occupants of the little boat were conversing in their usual quiet sentimental fashion, but to Violet's experienced eyes there seemed no danger of any imminent crisis.

It was one of those grey days which occasionally come as a refreshing contrast to the unvarying blue of sea and sky on that fair southern shore. The sun had hidden itself behind a bank of clouds, the Mediterranean shone like a burnished steel mirror, and fair Capri, like a coquettish woman, lay concealed behind her veil of grey gossamer. It was a neutral tinted picture, but scarcely less lovely in its sombre hues than in its ordinary vivid colouring of sapphire and emerald.

"What an ideal time this has been in the 'land of afternoon,'" said Bruce Langdale, as they rowed slowly homewards.

"Yes, for a little while," was the calm reply. "Just as an episode you know; but you were quite right, it would become a trifle monotonous as a permanency. Fancy spending the remainder of one's existence in this 'Island of the Blest,' lovely as a dream though it is. Now I beg of you do not make the obvious retort," she went on. "I will consider that you have said it. I always thought how unutterably bored Adam and Eve must have got after a time in the Garden of Eden."

"They had the serpent," said Bruce.

Mrs. Seymour's lips parted in an amused smile at her own thoughts.

"Yes, serpents can be amusing sometimes," she answered. "Oh, here we are, and there is good old Hester waiting for us."

"What on earth is the matter with you, Hettie?" asked Mrs. Seymour an hour later, when the two women were making their toilettes for the *table-d'hôte*. "You look so worried, and not a bit like yourself."

"That is exactly what I feel," replied Mrs. Blair, with perfect truth. "It is the scirocco, I suppose; it always upsets my nerves."

"Well, something has, that is very evident."

And then, greatly to Hester's relief, the bell rang, and they went down to dinner.

The whole of that evening, while Bruce and Violet were sentimentalising amongst the orange-trees under a star-lit sky, was spent by Mrs. Blair in a state of wavering indecision. One moment she finally determined to warn Violet of her husband's arrival, and the next she decided that perhaps it would be better to let things take their course. After all, Violet was doing no real harm, the whole affair could be easily explained, and as Major Seymour had evidently set his heart upon giving his wife an agreeable surprise, why should she prove a spoil-sport? It was in this frame of mind that she rose the following morning, and with a distinct presentiment that before the sun set matters would arrange themselves without any intervention on her part.

After the early breakfast of coffee and rolls, which was always brought to the two friends in their sitting-room, Mrs. Seymour announced her intention of spending the morning in the garden in a state of luxurious idleness.

"It is too hot to go anywhere or do anything," she said, "so I shall indulge in *dolce far niente* under the trees; and"—with a little laugh—"if Mr. Langdale likes to read Browning to me, he has a very soothing voice, and it may possibly lull me to slumber."

"Shall I come too?" asked Mrs. Blair, in a resigned tone of voice.

"Oh, not unless you like, Hettie. I am sure you would far rather be writing letters, or finishing your book up here in the cool, and you still look as if there was a touch of scirocco in the air."

Hester laughed.

"I suppose, literally translated, that solicitous speech means that my company is not indispensable on this occasion? Well, I should be thankful to be let off; and"—hopefully—"perhaps the whole thing will come to an end to-day."

Violet opened her grey eyes in astonishment.

"Why should it?" she asked. "We don't leave for another week."

"Nevertheless I feel that it will be so," repeated Mrs. Blair, with decision. And then, in order to evade further inquiries, she vanished through the folding doors into her bedroom.

As soon as Violet had established herself comfortably in the shadiest corner she could find, she was, as she had anticipated, joined by Bruce Langdale. Her suggestion, however, that he should "read her something," was mildly but firmly negatived, and he evinced a distinct desire for conversation of a more personal character than he had yet ventured upon in her society.

"This is my last day of happiness," he remarked, in a sentimental manner, gazing into his companion's face.

"Why?" she inquired, with a slightly astonished accent.

"I am off to-morrow," he said gloomily; "a—er—a friend of mine is coming to join me here; I had a wire yesterday, and we are going on to Sorrento."

"Oh, really?" she said carelessly, concealing her surprise under an air of well-assumed indifference. "This little island is getting monotonous, as I told you yesterday, and Hester and I are taking flight next week."

"It is a fearful bore having to go," he grumbled, "just as we have become such real *soul* friends, you and I."

"But must you go?" she asked in a dangerously soft voice, feeling that now or never was the moment in which to avenge the wrongs of her sex in general, and Cissy Travers's in particular.

Bruce Langdale rose impetuously to his feet, and took her hand in his most effective manner.

"It is utterly against my own wishes," he murmured. "You know what your society has been to me during this oasis in my barren life. Violet, tell me——"

Mrs. Seymour drew away her hand with an air of offended dignity.

"Who gave you leave to call me by my Christian name?" she demanded coldly. "To you I am Mrs. Seymour, and"—with a little dramatic pause—"the friend of Cissy Travers."

Bruce gazed at her in speechless amazement.

"Cissy Travers?" he ejaculated. "What has she got to do with me?"

"This much," replied Violet indignantly; "that it was you, a man of the world, nearly fifteen years her senior, who trifled with her affections when she was a young unsophisticated girl of seventeen, fresh from the country, none of your town-bred misses who are capable of looking after themselves in the nursery—you, Bruce Langdale, who shattered that child's faith and destroyed her illusions, just for the gratification of an idle moment. If men like you were shunned by all women you would not be the contemptible things you are."

Her listener still stood speechlessly before her, utterly taken aback at this sudden transformation in his "soul's affinity."

"Was there ever such a well-acted comedy?" he wondered. "Was it possible that her heart was untouched, and that she had been fooling *him*, the irresistible, all the time, leading him on with her sweet smiles and lowered eyelids, her little stabbing speeches and shafts of satire which had attracted him quite as much as her softer phases?" Then his old coolness and self-possession returned, and he advanced boldly towards her with outstretched hands. "Come, Violet, let there be an end of this folly. You are only trying to disguise your real feelings, surely."

"By what right do you call this lady by her Christian name?" asked an indignant masculine voice at this juncture as a bronzed soldierly-looking man emerged suddenly from behind a clump of rhododendrons.

"Frank!" exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, the rosy colour rushing to her face and her eyes sparkling with delight. "Is it you or your ghost, and where on earth have you come from?"

"It is I, my darling, but I will explain all that later on," said the newcomer gravely. "This gentleman owes me an explanation now."

"An old lover, by Jove," reflected Bruce. "What can she see in him? He is getting into the forties, and his hair is rapidly turning grey." Then recovering his former nonchalant manner, he turned to the stranger. "Mrs. Seymour and I are friends," he began, "and—er—there is nothing very extraordinary in my addressing her informally under these circumstances."

"What does the fellow mean, Vi?" demanded Major Seymour in an angry aside. "Hester says you have only known him a week or so—confound his impudence."

"Do not make a scene, Frank," murmured Violet imploringly. "It is all right." Then aloud she added—"We all seem to be rather at cross purposes somehow. Perhaps"—turning with a radiant smile to Bruce—"it will simplify matters if I introduce you to my husband. Mr. Langdale—Major Seymour."

Bruce started visibly.

"Your husband," he stammered; "but I thought——"

"You thought I was a widow," said Violet calmly. "Yes, I know, but no one told you so; you formed the idea for yourself. Now, Frank, come and explain this sudden appearance." And with a little defiant bow to the discomfited Langdale, she took her husband's arm and led him away in the direction of the hotel.

"After all, Vi, the fellow never proposed to you," remarked Major Seymour an hour or so later, when he, his wife, and Mrs. Blair were discussing the recently played comedy.

"Well, not in so many words," admitted Violet, "but"—confidently—"he was on the point of it, and he would have done so if you had not made such an inopportune appearance on the scene. Anyhow"—with a complacent air—"I gave him my mind about Cissy, did I not?"

"You certainly did," replied her husband. "I arrived just in time for that burst of eloquence, and wondered what the deuce had come to you. That bit about 'shattering her childish faith,' etc., was distinctly effective."

Violet pouted.

"It is all very well for you and Hettie to laugh," she said, "but I consider I have rendered my sex an invaluable service by taking that man's conceit down a peg or two."

"All's well that ends well," remarked Frank Seymour gravely;

"but it was a risky experiment, Vi, and you may be thankful to have got out of it so easily; and——"

"Oh, don't scold me, Frank," she said caressingly, "just as you have come back. There is the bell. Do you think he will have the face to put in an appearance?"

"Oh, rather. It would take more than that to make a man go without his luncheon," returned Major Seymour with conviction, and he was right. They had scarcely seated themselves before Bruce Langdale sauntered into the room, calm and unconcerned as ever, with not the smallest sign of defeat visible in either his manner or his movements. He was accompanied by a tall, handsome, and slightly foreign-looking woman, his senior apparently by some four or five years, and on his way to his accustomed place he paused for a moment beside Violet's chair.

"Mrs. Seymour," he began, with a somewhat mocking intonation in his voice, "may I introduce—my wife? Mrs. Langdale—Mrs. Seymour."

"Where has he been hiding her all this time?" inquired Violet in an indignant undertone, when the Langdales had passed on to their seats a little higher up the long table. "No one ever heard of his being married, and of all the shabby tricks—why don't you speak?" she added impatiently, finding neither of her companions at all responsive. Mrs. Blair's shoulders were shaking with suppressed emotion, and Major Seymour was openly convulsed with laughter.

"What a finale!" gasped the former, recovering her powers of speech.

"I seem to remember hearing some story about a coffee-planter's daughter out in Trinidad, who got hold of him when he was a lad of eighteen or nineteen," said Major Seymour, composing his countenance to its normal expression; "but they were separated for years, I fancy—incompatibility of temper. She looks like it, doesn't she? I suppose there has been a reconciliation for some reason or other." Then turning to his wife with a mischievous gleam in his dark eyes, he added: "You see, Vi, he never meant to propose to you in any case. You were only his 'soul's affinity.' You may have taught him a lesson, and you probably have, but it strikes me that at the fall of the curtain it is the *hero* of the comedy who has distinctly scored!"

